CHRISTA WOLF'S QUEST: FROM MOSCOW NOVELLA TO CHRISTA T.

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Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my parents, Roland and Ollene Swanson, who instilled in me the importance of faith, family and education; their guidance and values have encouraged me in all my academic endeavors. They have made this degree possible through their moral and financial support as well as countless hours of babysitting. I owe them much gratitude. I must also mention my husband, Bryan, and my beautiful children, Peter and Annika, who, although they didn't really help much with this paper, certainly make my life very, very sweet.

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I. Introduction

Christa Wolf is regarded as one of the premier German writers. She has written and published more than fifteen novels and collections of essays and stories. Writing and evolving mostly behind the iron curtain, she was heralded and hated, adored and despised, encouraged and suppressed, by her own government, the Socialist Unity Party of the former German Democratic Republic, as well as by critics in the West, including the United States. Her work reached far beyond the East German borders, finding much popular and cultural acclaim, not only in both the GDR and Federal Republic of Germany, but world-wide as well. The reception of her work and convictions in her homeland, however, was often anything but positive. Her relationship with the SED party was frequently contradictory. She suffered harsh criticism and limitations imposed by the SED, while still taking advantage of and enjoying privileges only party officials could grant. Despite all of this, she has battled tirelessly for the cause of socialism, a calling which transcends government leaders, political parties, and open or closed borders. For Christa Wolf, the goal and purpose of furthering socialism and ensuring the equality and enlightenment of all members of society was of the utmost importance and a driving force in her life and work.

Wolf's socialism is a system which holds the promise of a peaceful life free from conflict for all members of its society. It is a humane system, and serves to equalize its citizens economically, intellectually and socially. Socialism allows for the

acknowledgement and development of individual potential, so that members are free to create and support a strong collective.

Wolf's strong relationship to socialism remains constant throughout the changes she undergoes as a writer as well as the changing themes present in her novels. This relationship and these changes can be traced through analysis of three of her novels, *Moskauer Novelle, Der Geteilte Himmel,* and *Nachdenken ueber Christa T.* Their decreasing adherence to government proscribed tenets and their increasing attention to the development of a personal commitment to socialism reflect Wolf's own journey.

She was born Christa Ihlenfeld on March 18, 1929, in Landsberg an der Warthe, which today is the Polish city Gorzow Wielkopolski. Her father, Otto Ihlenfeld, along with her mother, owned a grocery store in Landsberg. Her parents easily conformed to the Nazi regime, and it was no wonder that Christa, only a young girl at the time, was an enthusiastic supporter of Hitler and the Third Reich. She happily joined the *Bund Deutscher Maedchen* (League of German Girls), and found Hitler, his soldiers, and the war very exciting. Despite the war, Christa seemed to enjoy a fairly happy, average childhood, and attended the *Gymnasium* in Landsberg from 1939 until 1945, when her world changed forever.

She and her family, like countless other families, were forced to abandon their homes and livelihoods in flight from the Red Army. Her father, by this time, had been captured and held as a prisoner of war. The horrors and terror she experienced while on the road changed her perception of war completely. She now saw the devastation and sorrow inflicted on her fellow man, and she would suffer from feelings of guilt for the rest of her life. The journey left an indelible mark on her. She held a frozen infant in her

arms and watched the mother's face as she handed him to her. She shared a campfire on a country road with a German communist, who was still clothed in a concentration camp uniform (Baumer 17-19). The changes in her brought about by these and doubtlessly other events led her to burn her girlhood diary, an act she hoped would somehow cleanse some of the guilt (Hilzinger 7). This act was so important to her, that years later after becoming a writer, three of her protagonists, Vera Brauer in *Moscow Novella*, Rita Seidel in *Divided Heaven*, and Nelly Jordan in *Patterns of Childhood,* did the same.

In 1945, the Ihlenfeld family settled in Gammelin where Christa worked as a clerical assistant to the Mayor and continued her high school studies in Schwerin. At this time the shift from national socialism to socialism began in the eastern half of Germany. The national socialistic ideology of "you alone are nothing, your people are everything" was effortlessly transformed into the socialist idea of "I to We" in the GDR (Baumer 23). In 1947, the family moved to Bad Frankenhausen on the Kyffhauser and Christa passed her *Abitur* exam. Based on her readings of Marx and Engels, she made a very conscious decision to join the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* or SED (Socialist Unity Party).

Dr. Hans Meyer, a great intellectual figure of the time, moved to Leipzig from Frankfurt on the Main. He was searching for a "humane socialism" in East Germany, and he became one of Christa Wolf's most influential professors. Since he had abandoned the West to seek socialism in the East, East German students revered him, and Christa Wolf was honored when, in 1953, he served as her advisor as she wrote her thesis, "Problems of Realism in the Work of Hans Fallada."

She married Gerhard Wolf in 1953. He was a fellow student and they began to work together on film projects and anthologies of contemporary German literature. Gerhard would go on to attain much acclaim in his own right, receiving numerous prizes for his essays on poetry and literature. They had two daughters, Annette, born in 1952, and Katrin, born four years later.

Wolf began working as a research assistant in the German Writers' Union. Its periodical was called *Neue Deutsche Literatur* and she served first as a literary critic and then as its editor from 1958 to 1959. In 1955, she became a member of the executive committee of the Writers' Union, a position she held until 1976. She was named the Chief Editor for the publishing house Neues Leben, which published books for young people in 1956. It was shortly after this time that Christa began to sense a strong need and desire to write. She had studied German literature in Jena and Leipzig and had learned her lessons very well. She was very familiar with and, at that time, in complete agreement with the requirements of socialist realism.

II. Socialist Realism

East Germany, under Soviet guidance, underwent several reforms to render its transformation to socialism complete and rid all traces of Western ideology from its people. Many of the reforms were economic, involving business and land ownership in an effort to equalize the financial position of the citizens. The reforms, however, did not stop there. Soviet and German officials also saw the need to decree a "cultural and scientific renaissance" to encourage an intellectual shift as well (Buehler 2). The Cultural

Association for the Democratic Renewal of Germany was founded on July 4, 1945. Thus died any hope for the independence of literature in what would become the GDR.

The original motivation for the newly formed Cultural Association was to advance "the highest principles of human dignity and freedom – free from allegiance to any ideology or political party" (3). However, many members of the Association were zealous communists, and they began to view their purpose as serving as a forum for the promotion of communist propaganda. Still, this was not seen as a serious threat to artistic independence until the formation of the SED (Socialist Unity Party) in 1946. One of the goals of the new party was the "Cultural Renewal of Germany, Advancement of Literature, Art and Science" (4). Politics and literature would become inextricably linked in the GDR as the SED began to establish its firm control over writers and their works.

The GDR was officially founded on October 7, 1949 and remained under strong Soviet influence. The SED regarded writers as tools of the state, their role as artists and creators much diminished by their new function as supporters of socialist propaganda and teachers of socialist ideology to the masses. Further strengthening the bond between the government and writers were the generous subsidies and numerous privileges paid to the writers, basically rendering them employees of the state. There was a great pool of literary talent in the GDR at the time of its creation. After the war, many writers, poets, and musicians decided to settle there as the preferred (socialist) state, instead of remaining in the capitalist West (Krisch 131). This state would be free "from reactionary influences that had played such a baneful role in their country's past" (Turner 102). The Soviet occupation authorities had presented a liberal, encouraging face to cultural matters, at least until the onset of the cold war (103).

The style eventually mandated for GDR literature was named socialist realism. Socialist realism had been officially adopted in the USSR in 1934 at the first Soviet Writers' Congress, after a 1932 decision to restructure all artistic and literary organizations. The GDR regime adopted the Soviet method of literary control and imposed it on the GDR. Stalin had regarded the writer as the "engineer of the human soul" and insisted on founding the Soviet Writers' Association, whose purpose was to monitor the works of writers and take action against those who did not conform to party politics (Finney 11). The East German Writers' Union was eventually founded for the same purpose with the officials of the SED planning literature's direction and judging and controlling all works produced by East German authors.

As in the Soviet Union, there was a clear purpose for literature in the eyes of the government. Its role was of the utmost importance in serving socialist society: "Literature was to serve as the catalyst for inspiring the masses to the cause of socialism" (Buehler 6). Socialist realism authors were to follow Lenin's idea for literature and the arts:

> This means art will be able to participate in the forging of the spirit of the socialist personality, the development of the socialist conscience, the ideological, ethical values and the conception of beauty of the new society, since it is the arts with its specific methods which are able to influence the thoughts and feelings of man. This is essential to the forming of the socialist personality (7).

Socialist realism and literature had many duties, which unfortunately did not allow for much "artistic initiative" (Rose 326). Their main function was to promote "the ideals and policies espoused by the political infrastructure." Literature must also clearly show the principles of brotherhood and equality under the system, as well as positively reflect and encourage support of government decisions (Buehler 7-8).

The guidelines set forth for socialist realism were unyielding. They consisted of five basic tenets, which, if they were diligently followed by authors, would produce literature that would fulfill its higher purpose of furthering socialism. The tenets can be found in detail in George Beuhler's book, *The Death of Socialist Realism in the Novels of Christa Wolf* and summarized by Finney on page 12.

The first tenet is "objective reflection of reality." Authors were to use a realistic style in writing, with clear images and language that would allow the reader to clearly see the story, as well as feel a part of the action. The story must appear real to the reader. This tenet is also referred to as "totality," which calls for the realistic integration of socialist ideals into a work. Socialism should appear to be a natural part of the lives of the characters.

A deep love for socialism must be apparent in the works, which was termed "partiality." All characters in a book must value socialism over any personal needs or desires. Socialism must clearly be presented as the only acceptable form of government and fascism and capitalism must be portrayed as detestable.

The spirit of the people and country must be represented by the third tenet, "national orientation." German (or Soviet) ideals, characteristics, and traditions should be utilized in the stories to help create a bond between the readers and the work. This also strengthens the book's appeal to the broadest spectrum of the public, since one of the many purposes of socialist realism is to reach as many people as possible.

The "typical" allows the reader to experience and recognize the universal truths as seen by socialism. The truths of socialism are brotherhood, equality and infallibility of

the government. These ideas should be pervasive in the stories and encountered often in the pages of a socialism realism novel.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, there must exist "positive heroes" in the stories. These are individuals who possess all qualities essential in a dedicated socialist. Such an individual must sacrifice all for the state and be unconcerned about personal issues. His love for socialism always prevails and can be used as a model to which the average citizen should aspire. He is rewarded in the end with the bliss experienced within socialist society.

Although censorship was prohibited by the constitution of the GDR, a book must have received an "authorization to print" from the Ministry of Culture before it appeared in GDR bookstores and libraries (Bathrick 37-38). The SED had the East German literary world tightly in grasp. According to Bathrick in his book, *The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR*, the system which connected the writer to the SED had been perfected. This system began in local libraries and went through the State Ministry of Culture to the Central Committee of the SED (35). This system was well in place by the time Christa Wolf was ready to publish her first work.

Up until Wolf's first published text, her reputation had been steadily growing in East German literary circles as an editor and critic. She was steadfastly and very vocally anti-fascist. This helped to propel her along the path to becoming a revered and respected member of the socialist literary world. She began making the first of many trips outside of the GDR, the first to the Soviet Union in 1955 and the Federal Republic of Germany in 1960.

Although initially a ready tool for the socialist government, Wolf's need and desire to write stemmed from a much deeper place within her. The path she took from critic to author was certainly not the result of a conscious decision to begin to enjoy the many perks and financial benefits which East German authors received. In fact, she suffered great inhibitions with regard to writing prose. At that time, her first priority was serving the East German state and strengthening socialism, and she felt that she would be more effective as a critic (Hilzinger 9).

In this mindset, Wolf won her battle against her inhibitions. Despite her blind commitment to the furthering of socialism, and her firm belief that her work as critic was best serving the state, she began to write. She started to put down her memories and daydreams into prose form. She strived to "recreate her past at the perfect moment, a time when the present retreats far enough not to interfere with the past she was reliving, but remaining close enough to still be reached" (Hilzinger 9).

Her first text is clearly the work of an impassioned believer in socialism. Wolf adheres point for point to the tenets laid down by the SED and espoused by the East German Writers' Union. Her characters and their actions blend perfectly with the socialist realism guidelines and often seem almost too good to be true.

III. *Moscow Novella*

Christa Wolf's first published novel was *Moskauer Novelle* (*Moscow Novella*). It was first published in 1961 and then slightly changed in 1966 and republished. It is a short work, painstakingly composed in complete adherence to the guidelines set up under socialist realism. Christa Wolf's absolute devotion and unambivalent loyalty to the East

German state and the socialist government were clearly demonstrated in this work. At this point in her life, she was still unaware of any faults in the SED regime and believed that the regime shared her own socialist philosophy. She created idealistic characters who are true socialist role models and adhered to socialist realism guidelines in all other aspects. This demonstrated to herself and others that she was strongly committed to what she saw as their common goal.

This work was not particularly well received by the public in the GDR even though she received the Artists' Prize in the city of Halle that same year. It was meant to speak to the generation of young people who grew up with National Socialism. This group belonged neither to the older generation who always considered themselves anti-fascists and faithful communists, nor to the very young, who, never knowing a different regime, were completely secure in their dedication to the new society and never battled any kind of doubts (Hilzinger 10).

Even though Wolf was a dedicated socialist, many, if not most, of her fellow East Germans were not. The history of the GDR was quite haphazard, leading to much instability in the SED party, as well as discontent among its people. The Soviet Union had initially been reluctant to create the GDR, preferring a neutralized, united, unarmed Germany. In fact, the Soviet leader in 1944 had expressed great doubts that communism could be transplanted to Germany (Dennis 12). A significant impetus for German division was the currency reform implemented by the West in 1948, which was met by strong Russian protest. The Russians felt that the Allies had clearly violated the Postdam Agreement (Turner 24). West Germany began to discuss rearming in 1952, and the Contractual Agreements between Bonn and the three Western allies were signed, a

concrete step to creating a Federal Republic with its own army (Smith 217). Although Stalin offered one last time to dismantle the GDR and the SED if the West would agree to one, though armed, neutral German state, this offer was not pursued by the Western powers (Dennis 22). Diplomatic activity and negotiations continued, but Khrushchev, influenced by East German leaders, stated that "the mechanical reunification of both parts of Germany which were developing in different directions was unreal" (Childs 43). As its severance from the West became clear, Walter Ulbricht called for a German version of socialism at the Second Congress of the SED in 1952. Socialism was to be carefully "constructed" (Smith 218). It is only natural that a country and a system which had been almost arbitrarily forced upon its people would suffer from instability and conflict. In fact, Jean Edward Smith expresses this very strongly in his statement, "The East German Government was conceived in desperation and born in confused illegitimacy" (215).

The years leading up to Christa Wolf's beginnings as a writer were racked with conflict and instability in the government and unhappiness and want on the part of the GDR citizens. On June 17, 1953, over 300,000 East German workers in more than 270 locations staged a revolt to protest high work norms to pay for the "building of socialism." The Soviet Union openly supported East Germany for the first time as Soviet troops crushed the revolt, killing 21, injuring many more and imprisoning at least 1,000 people (Childs 32-33). These events caused the SED leadership to tighten their control to discourage further uprisings while also concentrating on citizens' needs for a basic standard of living (Allinson 61). Unfortunately, conditions did not improve significantly. Living conditions in Hungary and Poland were also less than satisfactory, and citizens' criticism of socialism became very sharp there as well. One shop worker remarked that

"socialism is worse than capitalism, at least we could buy things then. Today there's no eggs, butter, milk and so on" (73).

Farming was also an area of great contention in the late 1950's. Wolf's cozy, jolly description of the collective farm in *Moscow Novella* demonstrates her initial blind devotion to the SED and socialism. In East Germany, at least, farmers were one of the groups most critical of socialism, due to the SED collectivization of the farms. Many farmers were in favor of reestablishing a free economy and dissolving these farms (75). Their resistance was "overwhelming" (78). It is easy to understand their anger and resistance, for 40% of farm collectivization occurred in early 1960 accompanied by state violence (Bathrick 33).

This was East Germany at the time of *Moscow Novella.* It was quite different from the picture painted by Wolf in the pages of the story. It is clear that Wolf felt that she was truly trying to serve her state by encouraging doubters to embrace socialism and the SED. Years later, she was embarrassed by *Moscow Novella*. Although she clearly recognized that her sentences were awkward and her dialogues stiff and contrived, she accepted these faults as the mark of a beginner. What bothered her most was the way that the book read like a textbook for socialist realism, a political tract, with its perfect formal structure and unyielding characters, who performed like puppets of socialist realism (Hilzinger 12). She commented self-deprecatingly that she had learned her lessons too well, that her perspective was completely shaded by them, and they distanced her from a realistic viewpoint (Stephan 14).

Moscow Novella tells the story of Vera Brauer, an East German pediatrician who travels to Moscow with a group of colleagues for a three-week conference on medical

technology. Their goal is a brotherly exchange of knowledge and resources between the Soviets and East Germans. On her first evening in Moscow, Vera encounters a Russian translator Pawel Koshkin, whom she knew as a member of the Soviet occupation forces in her hometown. Vera worked as a clerk for the mayor of Fanselow, and Pawel was a lieutenant for the Red Army. They had overcome the complicated scenario and enjoyed a flirtatious and romantic relationship before he was seriously injured and then sent away. They had since married others and each had a child.

Their meeting in Moscow in 1959 was a complete surprise to both of them and a flood of emotions overcomes them both within moments of their encounter. They struggle to maintain level-headedness amidst the tide of feelings they experience. Vera recognizes the danger that his closeness poses and attempts to keep Pawel at a distance through abrupt dialogues and formal sentences. She fails, and although an instance of intimacy is only intimated in the novella, they become intertwined in their attraction for each other.

Vera is overcome with guilt, not only about her adulterous interest in Pawel, but also by the additional burden of the events before their parting at the end of the war. He was injured rescuing Vera's brother and some other youths from a burning munitions warehouse, a fire which had been set by Nazi rebels. Vera knew about their activities before the fire was set, and therefore felt responsible for the eye injuries Pawel sustained in the blaze. These injuries prevented him from following his dream of becoming a surgeon.

Vera's resolve weakens and they become close, spending much time discussing their past, the future and the hopelessness of their feelings for one another. Vera

constantly battles a wide range of emotions. She begs her husband to write her daily and promises to do the same, then is overwhelmed with jealousy when she thinks about Pawel's wife and child.

The group spends five days in Kiev, a period of time during which Vera decides to follow her heart and succumb to Pawel's urgings. They become intimate on a level only vaguely alluded to and sink even deeper in the quagmire of their relationship. After they return to Moscow, however, Vera regains control of her heart and her head and breaks off any romantic involvement. She realizes that she has the upper hand in the situation and it is up to her to preserve integrity for them both as well as for their families.

She finally meets Pawel's wife, Sina, and feels an instant kinship with her. Sina tells her of an opportunity for Pawel to work in Siberia, a move which would advance his career greatly. He had resisted the move to that point out of fear of the unknown. Vera selflessly joins forces with Sina, and encourages Pawel to accept the job offer in the best interest of both him and his family. All fences are mended and the novella concludes with Pawel and Sina accompanying Vera to the airport for her departure for East Germany. Vera gives Sina a pearl necklace as a sign of her affection and the women embrace. Vera kisses Pawel on the forehead and the two part, both at peace with their newfound friendship and secure in their devotion to socialism and their state.

The first guideline easily seen in the work is the objective reflection of reality. From the very beginning, Wolf uses style and language to confer perfectly clear images to the reader. Already in the second page of text, she begins to use vivid descriptions to present an easily attainable reality to the reader. "I imagined Moscow differently..."

Vera remarks to Pawel, "More narrow. And gray" (*MN,* 10). When asked by Pawel in what colors she now views Moscow, she responds, "Light ochre, almost yellow. And pink." (*MN*, 10).

Her descriptions of Moscow continue, allowing the reader a clear and vivid picture of the novel's setting. Moscow becomes almost a character of its own in the novella:

> Vera looked out from her hotel room window at the lively scene which had already fascinated her early that afternoon, now seen illuminated by nighttime lights. Twenty floors down, at the foot of the building, several wide streets came together at a large, open square that was crossed and navigated by a never-stopping flow of cars. Slender, dark rivulets pushed themselves at the crosswalks in the way of the surge of steel. Vera never tired of listening to the even, dark sounds. Waves, that broke on the high walls of the hotel and had enveloped each solitary noise – motors and laughter and shouts (*MN*, 11).

Vera's immediate surroundings are also described in great detail: "She looked around her room and smiled. Plump armchairs with white covers, dark blue velvet curtains, a lace coverlet on the bed, a lavender silk-shaded lamp, marble writing desk and a crystal carafe for water" (11).

Vera falls in love with Moscow and the early part of the novella is wrought with glowing images of the city:

> Moscow is a vast city built on seven hills, rising seamlessly from the unending, open landscape. From the new university, she lies at your feet, humming with the joy of life and creative impulses, towered over by church steeples, onion domes, bright monasteries, and enormous white skyscrapers. Vera could not get enough of this city. She walked through the streets, sat on benches in the parks, rode both above and below the earth to the farthest edges of the city. Most of all, the people excited and enchanted her, at every hour in masses on the streets, yet everything other than just a mass. Their composure, paired with the energy emanating from them, captivated Vera.
> Moscow had grown over the centuries, under the brief, hot sun of the eastern summer, washed by the endless fall rains, hardened by the crisp frost of the continental winters. Moscow (17).

Wolf's vivid descriptions of Moscow certainly helped transport her readers into the city and render them much closer to the story and the action. They were also, however, bound to leave a positive impression on government leaders and SED critics. As mentioned before, Moscow became a sort of living, breathing, not to mention beautiful character in the story, a role fitting for the center and origin of socialist ideals.

The city of Moscow is not the only aspect of the novella described by Wolf in clear and vivid language. She takes great care in portraying the early relationship of Vera and Pawel, being careful to allude to the "good" characters (socialist) and "bad" ones, the fascists. The first meeting between Vera and Pawel is detailed as follows:

> It was raining then, too, when I met him for the first time, if you can call it a meeting. He came to bring new orders from the occupying forces to the mayor, and I slipped and fell in front of him. Panic-stricken by his green and brown uniform, I ran through the kitchen and out of the house, from the mayor's garden straight over the fields and fences behind the village, and all in the pouring rain. And there he sat, completely alone in the middle of the kitchen as I, dirty and breathless, opened the door to the pastor's kitchen, where normally a dozen women are arguing at the stove; he had learned from the mayor – that coward – where I lived. He said seriously: 'Good Day, Miss. Don't run away, there's no need. I don't eat children' (*MN,* 13).

Later, Vera relives the night when Pawel and her brother are injured at the hands of the young, fascist rebels in the town of Fanselow. Details come rushing back into her memory and the images of that night are clearly and painstakingly recreated on the pages so that the reader finds yet another reason to detest the German fascist movement and stand behind the communist hero:

> July 1945. The Soviet warehouse in front of the village Fanselow burns as brightly as a torch before the dark, nighttime forest. Vera pushes through the throng of curious onlookers and Soviet soldiers who were spraying water and barricading the area to the barn door – the warehouse was formerly a barn – and called her brother's name in a shrill voice. Lieutenant Koshkin had brought him here in the afternoon. She finally finds him. He is lying on a stretcher. The Lieutenant hasn't been found. Vera waits until they bring him. They drive him,

> unconscious to the village. Jürgen is lying next to him. Vera walks behind the lead car with her head buried in her hands. 'My God, what have I done? Why are you punishing me?' (32-33)

Wolf uses very realistic and clear images and gives detailed information in this section of the novella to describe the events and even the intense guilt under which Vera suffers. Although her participation in the event slightly tarnishes the socialist armor of Wolf's heroine, this renders her perhaps a little more human and represents similar emotions experienced by much of Wolf's young readership. Had Wolf simply glossed over the incident, she would have lost a vital opportunity to accentuate again the integrity and honor of the communists versus the evil of the fascists.

Representing partiality, or party orientation was a guideline very important to Christa Wolf, and one to which she paid close attention. At that point in her life, she saw herself first and foremost as a socialist, then perhaps, secondly, as a writer. She felt a grave responsibility to the government and even to the founders of socialism to present the socialist ideology in the best possible light and give it a starring role in her work.

Very striking in *Moscow Novella* are the characters. Wolf conceived them to be one-dimensional in their political convictions, rendering them not only ideal examples of the perfection of socialism, but also the positive heroes required of yet another socialist realism guideline. Not once in the course of the story does a single character question or doubt his beliefs or purpose for even an instant. Not only are Vera and Pawel deeply committed to the party, but the others are as well. Without exception, the other characters are considered good for they are socialist. Their motives are pure and intentions well-meaning. Walter, employee of the East German government and leader of the group of East Germans visiting Moscow, is described as the quintessential

socialist. His dedication to the party and the government are detailed in particular in the early portion of the book when he first visits Red Square:

> Her glance fell on Walter. He stood alone, bowed, old and looked at the red star on the tower. Vera knew the life of this man and understood. This was his day. Walter Kernten was one of the first members of the Spartacus Union, in the twenties he wore the gray uniform of the Red Frontfighters; the fascists hunted and captured him. High treason. Seven years of prison. Concentration camp. In the last years of the war forced labor in munitions. Illegal work under orders of the Gestapo. The stoic, unmoving face he wore today had grown in demonstrations, protests, interrogations and years in prison. Now it was shining through, his soul surged outward. Everyone could see it (*MN,* 16-17).

Vera considers Walter a sort of mentor, which naturally increases his heroic value to the reader. In a telephone conversation between the two of them after their arrival in Moscow, he offers her his protection and advice for the duration of their journey. He promises to be like a mother to her. In her eyes, she says, he is as mother and father to her. He laughs and sends her to bed (*MN,* 12).

Walter and Vera first met when he was her first teacher at the *Parteischule* and she credits him with instilling in her the necessary elements for her love of socialism. His life and experiences were as important to her learning process as his lectures on socialist ideals. She saw how his life and beliefs harmonized completely with the lessons he imparted to the students. She found freedom in his lessons and felt as if she had encountered what she had been desperately seeking in her own life. Walter became a father figure for her after her father's death, and the bond between them remained strong and unbreakable.

Although appearing much less frequently, Professor Lidia Worochinowa is also a positive hero in the story. She holds a leading position at the Moscow clinic the group visits daily. Far older than Vera's thirty years, she is portrayed as wise, logical and kind.

It is Lidia, to whom Vera goes for advice and counsel when she hopes to help Pawel make the decision to leave Moscow with his family. Despite the questionable relationship between Vera and Pawel, she remains objective in their conversation and is pleased with Vera in the end, leaving her with socialist words of highest praise: "The older generation has the tendency to view today's youth very critically, because we are envious. I am always pleased when they are as equally strict and uncompromising with themselves as we were" (*MN,* 61).

Vera and Pawel are, of course, the main positive heroes in the story and also appealing representatives of socialism. The story does revolve around the weakness in their characters that leads to their affair, but their weakness renders them touchingly human and easy to identify with for the reader. It is easy to find oneself cheering for them as they struggle, and finding relief and favor as they conquer this weakness.

Pawel had sacrificed much for his political beliefs. His dream had been to become a doctor and that dream was destroyed while serving his country in the Red Army. Never once in the course of the novella does he complain or bemoan his situation. He has stoically accepted what happened to him and buried deep within himself feelings of regret or resentment. He appears to consider this great sacrifice a natural event in the course of his life. He has moved on.

Vera is the character to whom the reader becomes closest in the three weeks during which the story takes place. The reader is allowed more access to her thoughts and feelings, than to those of any other character, not only in the present situation with Pawel, but also in the events of their past. Wolf has created a character much like herself at that point in her life. Vera had supported the national socialist regime, at least to the

extent to which a child can consciously make that decision. She suffers under immense guilt for this mistake in her early years, not only for the conflict it presents with all socialism means to her now, but also for the responsibility she carries for Pawel's injury. Likewise, Wolf was a staunch national socialist in her young years, the guilt of which she has struggled with her entire life, despite the fact she was merely a young girl following examples set for her.

Both Vera and Pawel are able to see the path they must take, not only for the sake of their families' happiness, but also in the name of socialism and country. Vera realizes first that Pawel must support his wife in her decision to move to Siberia where they can both grow professionally while also serving the state. Vera wishes to return home to her husband and son and continue to heal the children who need her services. Katharina von Ankum comments in her book *Die Rezeption von Christa Wolf in Ost und West* that Vera is truly the quintessential positive heroine. Even though she is revealed to the reader, she represents a model who illustrates and confirms the friendship and solidarity between East Germans and Soviets (von Ankum 47).

Partiality is not only seen in the positive heroes which the characters represent, but also in the role that socialism and communism play in the novella. Throughout the story, the characters are united by socialism. The entire account occurs because of the attempt to create a brotherly exchange and a lasting partnership between medical experts in Berlin and Moscow. The Russians, a mere fourteen years after the end of the war, easily accept the East Germans. Their history as fascists has been completely erased by their new dedication to socialism. The Germans are regarded as honored guests by their hosts, not only professionally at the clinic, but also in the country. As Pawel encounters

Jakow Maximowitsch, an old friend who served with him in his company, the entire group is invited to take part in a celebration at his collective farm: "Not for a second did he let himself appear disconcerted by the fact that he faced a group of Germans. He quickly learned the reason for their trip, thought for a moment and invited them all with a grand hand gesture to the festival at his collective farm for the next afternoon. As they hesitated, he quickly intervened saying, 'We have never had German guests. Please come'" (*MN,* 43). They accept his invitation and spend the day laughing, singing and drinking with Russian peasants, who have equally been able to forget recent history. Instead they are united under the umbrella which the beliefs of Lenin and Stalin have spread over them. They even end the day singing in both Russian and German, the tears flowing freely as Vera leaves her newfound friends.

Although socialism plays a much greater role than fascism in the story, Wolf also makes a few references to the evil wrought by fascism. Vera encounters a nurse in a clinic at their welcome celebration. As she raises her glass with the nurse, she is told that her father had been hanged by fascists in the war. Vera is overcome with emotion and guilt at this revelation, feeling that both she and her father are responsible for his death and misery inflicted on his family. At this point, Vera wishes to leave Russia, almost willing to abandon the task assigned to her.

Vera's ties to fascism are also portrayed as the cause for Pawel's injury, which precluded his career in medicine. The munitions warehouse where he was injured was set ablaze by two fascist rebels, masquerading as Red Army sympathizers. Vera provided them with information they needed to carry out many of their deeds. Although she was only a young girl, understandably confused and traumatized by the events she

had experienced, she was unable to forgive herself for her role in the incident and her support of fascism. Vera is the only character in the story who is not either purely good or purely evil. She is allowed to be human, and Wolf has targeted those of her same era who felt the same confusion and destroyed loyalties as she herself did. Even with her apparent weaknesses, Vera is indeed a positive hero, for she shows her generation that good and forgiveness can and will prevail in socialist society if the desire for it is present.

National orientation is also not neglected in *Moscow Novella*. As Buehler made clear, it was considered very important to SED leaders that literature be accessible to as much of the population as possible (Buehler 7). The purpose of literature was to teach and strengthen socialist ideals and party politics to the greatest amount of people. It was, at least originally, hoped that the arts would help to close any gaps left between the intellectually elite and more common laborers, thus uniting society even further. Much effort was given to formulating stories and plots that would appeal to the masses and help them feel more integrated into socialist society while emphasizing its basic tenets.

The story takes place in Moscow, and, as mentioned earlier, the city of Moscow is given a supporting role. The details with which the city is described as well as Vera's enthusiasm and love for it certainly would have endeared it to all who read the book. Those who had previously had an opportunity to visit Moscow would have relived memories which would have, if not fond already, become fond through Wolf's descriptions. More importantly, for those for whom visiting Moscow remained an unattainable dream, they now had the chance to feel at home there, even sight unseen. Any possible animosities or even uncertainties toward Moscow and the Russians were swept away by this glowing account, thus uniting the two nationalities in a way

politicians alone would have been unable to do. Vera's frequent late-night walks provide much opportunity for Wolf to paint verbal pictures. These pictures demonstrate the magnitude of the history and the importance of Moscow to the communist world, and of course, the mention of specific landmarks was essential to this. Even though Vera is emotionally drained and physically exhausted after her trip to Moscow, a long evening of celebration and her reunion with Pawel, she ventures out into the city after midnight with the thought, "You cannot end your first evening in Moscow without a visit to Red Square" (*MN,* 12).

Another aspect of *Moscow Novella* which serves to further appeal to and unite the East German people is the relationship between Vera and the chambermaid at her hotel. Once again it is apparent that the former dividers of society, in this case social position, have now broken down, allowing all members of society to connect. The chambermaid is an older, motherly woman, and she worries about Vera's well-being throughout the story. Vera often takes late night strolls through the city and this causes the chambermaid much concern, and she asks Vera to at least sleep in so that she will not be overtired the next day. Vera is not annoyed by the woman's meddling. On the contrary, she is touched by her attention and the two develop a sort of friendship. As Vera prepares to leave the hotel for the last time, the two sit quietly for a few minutes together before the woman wishes Vera and her family well and kisses her on both cheeks.

A great deal of socializing takes place throughout the novella, despite the fact that the group is there on a professional assignment. The frequent celebrations provide opportunity for Germans and Russians, doctors and nurses, professionals and laborers to come together and raise their glasses to each other and the circumstances that have

brought them together. The horrors which took place between the two peoples in the relatively recent past are all but forgotten as all join in celebration. At a party for a newly built county hospital, "Gaiety sparkled like droplets of champagne. At the other end of the table they were already singing – in Russian and German" (*MN,* 20). At the festival on the collective farm, people who have never met before bond immediately. They also sing in both Russian and German, neither group feeling a need to downplay their heritage since being joined in communism.

The language Wolf used to write the story was fairly simple, and the plot is anything but complex. Even though the purpose of the group's trip to Moscow is professional and government sponsored, there is no technical language or complicated political statements which could confuse the reader with little experience in literature. *Moscow Novella* was a propaganda tool that could be easily used to reach all levels of society.

The last guideline of socialist realism to be addressed is the typical. The socialist ideology must be shown to consist of universal truths and to have a permanence which would outlast all other political systems. Wolf often presented Moscow as a symbol of communism, the center where it all began: "They passed by white stone palaces, and arched galleries how they, immutable, had survived the centuries, with fire and murder and war, heroics and intrigue" (*MN,* 25-26). Socialism's timelessness is shown by once again using a description of Moscow to represent it.

A key passage in the book occurs during a train ride to Kiev. The group becomes involved in an ideological conversation about their beliefs, hopes, dreams and the future. This is the perfect forum for Wolf to present the universal truths of socialism and

emphasize its all-consuming, far-reaching uniting arms. The members of the group are looking for reasons for existence and Walter seems to have found the answer, "To live long and purposefully . . . is the reason for everything we do" (*MN,* 36). At this statement, Heinz expresses frustration and sorrow for individuals who have forgotten the purpose socialism gives them: "It is so easy to forget that in daily life . . . And some forget it forever. They give themselves up, jump off, look for a place on the edge or on the other side. How many empty shells do you meet every day wherever you look?" (*MN,* 36)

Gisela has a dream of her own and tries to comfort Heinz: "One day we will wake up . . . and the world will be socialist. The atom bombs will have sunk in the oceans, and the last capitalist will have voluntarily dissolved his stock portfolio" (*MN,* 36).

They attempt to construct the perfect being of the future, one who is in perfect harmony with their socialist beliefs. They each add characteristics to render this future man or woman the ideal socialist world citizen. After the others have spoken, Vera asks Pawel to contribute to their project and wants to know the most important characteristic the future man will possess: "Brotherhood . . . To be able to live fearlessly. Not to have to mistrust one another. Not to envy another's success, but to help him bear his failures. Not to have to hide his weaknesses. To be able to tell the truth. Innocence, naivete, sensibility are no longer a curse. Success no longer has to mean hypocrisy" (*MN,* 38). Vera wishes their creation to have strength of character and the strength to conquer oneself.

Within this short and innocent conversation, Wolf has been able to insert the most important socialist ideals and truths of brotherhood, equality and belonging in a secure

society. The conversation is not political; it consists merely of the musings of good friends and colleagues, yet she has managed to present a summary of the consummate socialist in thought and purpose. She has done so with a warmth that surely appealed to all who read it, and especially those still grappling with their former convictions.

For Christa Wolf, *Moscow Novella* completed its task as she had intended. Although Wolf lamented its lack of depth later, and considered it too much like a socialist realism textbook, it did mirror her own commitment to the SED party and socialism at the time she wrote it. She had only just embarked on her path as a writer and as a socialist. The two elements could only come together in such a perfectly crafted tool for the government she still loved. She had yet to begin to forge her own way.

IV. *Divided Heaven*

In 1960, before the publication of *Moscow Novella,* Wolf attended a conference for authors of the Mitteldeutscher Verlag at the Bitterfeld Electrochemical Conglomerate. There she heard party head Walter Ulbricht introduce a new concept that became widely known in East Germany as the *Bitterfelder Weg* (Bitterfeld Way). The motivation for this concept was to lower any barriers between the working classes and the intelligentsia and to equalize society under socialism. Ulbricht encouraged authors to live and experience culture by entering the many factories and working alongside their blue-collar counterparts. Laborers were also encouraged to write, and they organized themselves into writing circles and even published works of literature. Through the Bitterfeld Way, it was hoped that the perspectives of all involved would be freshened and that society would be one step closer to cultivating a new kind of socialist citizen. Wolf embraced this new idea. She eagerly followed the directive and went to work in a railroad car

factory, the *Betrieb Waggonbau Ammendorf.* Although the Bitterfeld Way was abandoned only a few years later for other methods of joining all members of society in socialism, the experience nevertheless had a significant impact on Christa Wolf and served as the backdrop in her novel *Der Geteilte Himmel* and short story "Dienstag, der 27. September."

In 1962 the Wolf family moved to East Berlin where Christa Wolf began to regard herself as a freelance author. She started to realize that she was losing some of her initial naïveté and innocence as she moved from pleasure writing to career writing. These changes were a direct result of the desire to be published. She came to this realization fairly soon in her writing career, for which she was grateful. She believed that the later a writer realizes this, the more difficult complete honesty can become. A writer must constantly confront and battle the influences that writing for others has on what is written. One such influence consists of the expectation of cultural politicians, literary critics and even the wishes of the readers (Hilzinger, 9).

It was in the dawn of this frame of mind that Wolf began to write *Der Geteilte Himmel (Divided Heaven). Divided Heaven* was published in 1963, only two years after the somewhat ignored *Moscow Novella*, but the differences between the two works are dramatic. It immediately became a bestseller in the GDR, and in only a few months more than 160,000 copies were sold. Wolf was awarded the DM 10,000 Heinrich Mann Prize of the Academy of the Arts of the GDR, and *Divided Heaven* was translated into at least fifteen languages, including Serbian, Hungarian, English and Japanese.

The situation in the GDR had changed slightly in the early 1960's when Wolf penned *Divided Heaven.* While still scarce, food supplies were more available and there

had been a slight rise in workers' wages (Allinson 119). Commitment to the SED among the general public was still not particularly strong, but the people of the GDR, while not enthusiastic, seemed to begin to accept the idea of the GDR state, which had been in existence for eleven years (120). As reflected in the prologue of *Divided Heaven*, many individuals felt a sense of relief after the borders had been sealed by the Berlin Wall. The action helped ease some of the pressure of the Berlin situation, and certainly staunched the flow of citizens leaving for the West. It also allowed East Germany to finally claim East Berlin as its official capital, which had been impossible as long as East Berlin lay outside the Soviet zone (Turner 135). However, as the East Germans began to fully realize the implications and permanence of the Wall, citizens started to fear a much deeper German division than already existed (Allinson 123). Oppositional opinion ran strong, and there was much activity during the late 1950's which led to strikes and work disruptions as Wolf describes in *Divided Heaven* (72). Increasing productivity and raising the GDR's economic status and global recognition were the main goals of the government at the time. This emphasis resulted in lack of attention to housing concerns, leaving many GDR citizens with inadequate or dangerously outdated housing (Krisch 96). The wait for an apartment was three years, and even longer for single people (Smith 26). The GDR was as yet no haven.

Divided Heaven, because of its slightly controversial style and subject matter, did precipitate an intense discussion among literary critics, politicians, and devotees of socialist realism. However, in the increasingly liberal political climate, the work achieved wide popularity among readers and politicians.

Divided Heaven was popular in the GDR because of its emphasis on a new political consciousness, in which individuals became more aware of their responsibility and contribution to socialism. It became popular in the West as well. Since it contained some negative aspects of life in the GDR, it appeared to some Westerners to be very objective for socialist literature, which was (incorrectly) viewed by the West Germans as resistance to the SED state (Stephan 56).

Wolf's goal was to address and strengthen any ideological weaknesses present in GDR citizens in the 1960's (Stephan 49). Even though it is an important aspect of the novel, her purpose was not to emphasize the division of Germany, or portray the West or even the fascists as enemies. In fact, Erwin Pracht, in his *Einfuehrung in den Sozialistischen Realismus* in 1975, identified *Divided Heaven* as no longer just anti-fascist literature, but the beginning of true socialist literature (von Ankum 77). This literature was developing a spirit of its own, not simply defining itself by what it opposed. Wolf insisted on the right of Rita, the main character, to self-actualize in order to be able to combat and resist the bureaucracy and the alienation which occurs in the modern world, one saturated with ideals created from scientific and technological developments in the industrialized world (Stephan 37).

Wolf's commitment to socialism was unchanged and clearly demonstrated in *Divided Heaven.* She had created characters whose confidence in the system was clear and who were struggling to overcome negative influences, less than ideal working conditions, and uncertain social conditions. Wolf believed that finding personal strength and fortitude are essential to a meaningful contribution to the socialist endeavor. She

created Rita, who is waiting and wanting to become someone of value to socialism (Wallace 59).

Divided Heaven tells the story of Rita Seidel, a 20-year-old student of education in the East German city of Halle. The story begins as Rita regains consciousness one evening in a hospital, where she has been recovering from an accident in the railroad car factory where she works during school recesses. Rita, in flashbacks, leads the reader through the past two years of her life and the events which led to the accident in the factory.

Rita was born in 1940, and was only a child at the end of the Nazi regime. She was raised by her mother and an aunt in a small East German village to where she and her mother had fled and taken refuge to wait for her father, who never came home from the war. After she completed school, she clerked in a small insurance office and lived a very ordinary life. One summer she meets Manfred Herrfurth, a chemist, who was vacationing after receiving a doctorate in chemistry. The two fall in love, and begin a long distance romance between Rita's village and Halle, where Manfred works in a textile factory.

Rita is approached by Erwin Schwarzenbach, a lecturer at a teaching college in Halle. He has been sent to recruit possible applicants for the college. He convinces Rita to enroll in teaching courses and move to Halle. She moves in with Manfred's family, where, despite the obvious tension between Manfred and his parents and between his mother and father, Rita and Manfred construct their own little lovers' sanctuary in Manfred's attic room.

At Erwin Schwarzenbach's urging, Rita secures a job at the railroad car factory with the help of Manfred's father. She is unsure and uncertain as she reports to work

there on her first day, but eventually gains confidence and becomes comfortable in the factory atmosphere. She is assigned to the "Ermisch Brigade", which consists of a group of twelve men who are responsible for installing windows in the railroad cars. She works directly with Rolf Meternagel, a fatherly figure who is dedicated to his work and the socialist cause. Despite unfair treatment in the past by colleagues and superiors, he has kept any bitterness in check and devoted himself to the task at hand, whatever that might be. He is a steadfast socialist, and views his duties at the factory as his opportunity to serve the state and his fellow citizens. He is a role model for Rita, and the two develop a warm relationship.

Another important model for Rita is Ernst Wendland, who is named director of the factory after his predecessor moves to West Germany. He, too, like Meternagel, is a true socialist, although not as blindly so as Meternagel. Abandoned by his wife for another man, he entertains romantic hopes for Rita and himself throughout the novel, although Rita finds his views on socialism more interesting than any romantic overtures he might initiate.

Rita recounts all the aspects of her life at the railroad car factory and her interactions with her colleagues. She tells of conflicts between individual workers as well as groups of workers, and she encounters dishonesty and laziness, as well as true comradeship. She is dismayed to learn that members of her brigade refuse to increase production, despite their obvious ability to do so. She watches, saddened, as colleagues betray each other for their own purposes and is perplexed as she observes an apparent collapse in the entire system as suppliers do not deliver, workers do not work, and nothing is produced, for no real reason.

At the same time, she struggles with her assignments at the teachers' college. She feels insecure and inferior to many of her fellow students and overwhelmed with her duties there. She works impossibly hard to keep up and not disappoint Erwin Schwarzenbach, and to not have to return home to her village. She meets Mangold, a former SED party functionary turned student, and she is confused by his pro-socialist commentary. Although she considers herself to be a true, committed and devoted member of socialist society, she is critical of his approach to socialist philosophy which serves to confuse her even more.

She feels like an outsider in the Herrfurth home, for both Mr. and Mrs. Herrfurth present their own complications around which Rita must maneuver. Mr. Herrfurth is vehemently despised by his son, who makes no attempt to mask these feelings. He is a former Nazi turned socialist of convenience, which to Manfred has become the entire basis for most of the socialist movement. Manfred regards Mrs. Herrfurth with cool indifference bordering on disdain for her lack of character. She, too, is a former Nazi supporter (although not even this with conviction) and has begun to idealize the West, and is anxious for an opportunity to make an escape. The arguments in the Herrfurth household are many and vocal, and Rita attempts to stay in the background and soothe Manfred for the sake of general harmony after each battle.

Rita and Manfred both take refuge in their love for each other and their attic hideaway. They hold on to what they have in the moment with a kind of quiet desperation. There is little talk of the future, as if they somehow know that their hidden idyll cannot exist forever. Although Rita remains determined in all of her activities, Manfred slips farther and farther away from her and their relationship. Never having

truly tried to reach a true belief in socialism, he slips from his resigned cynicism toward East German society and politics to outright criticism of politics on all levels, politicians and policies. He and Rita conflict on many of the issues she holds dear, and though their love remains intact, many of the other threads holding their relationship together began to unravel. Manfred reaches a breaking point when an invention, the spin-jenny, on which he had been collaborating with a friend is rejected purely on the basis of politics and not merit. His friend strikes back, is fired from his job and officially reprimanded. Manfred's attempts to help him are in vain.

In early summer of 1961, when Manfred is sent to a chemists' conference in Berlin, he crosses over into West Berlin and never returns to Halle. He writes Rita and tries to persuade her to join him in West Germany to begin to build a life together free of all the hypocrisy he claimed existed in the GDR. She does indeed visit him, mere days before the construction of the Berlin Wall on August 13, 1961. Although her love for him is a strong as it had ever been, she purchases a round-trip ticket back into East Berlin and returns to the East after only an afternoon with Manfred. Her belief in the socialist system and the convictions of others who hold the same ideals such as Meternagel, Schwarzenbach, and Wendland have given her the strength and renewed her devotion to the cause, despite the inherent problems and contradictions she has witnessed. She is ready to fight for socialism.

Her journey does not end as she crosses from the decadence of the West back into the socialist stronghold of the East. She is still just a young girl, devastated by the broken love affair and questioning her actions, no matter how strong her convictions might have seemed at the time. After her return from visiting Manfred in Berlin and the construction

of the Berlin Wall a week later, Rita collapses and falls between two railway cars and is almost crushed between them. The reader learns that the accident was most likely a suicide attempt, born out of her despondency over Manfred and the confusion she felt about her future and the future of socialism. However, she manages to pull herself to safety, with only minor physical injuries. She wakes in the hospital, which is where the novel begins. Her body recovers quickly, but her spirit and emotions are still ravaged from the events of the past several months. Her doctors, concerned about her apathy and refusal to heal spiritually, send her to a sanatorium after her physical wounds have healed. It is there that she eventually finds peace, with herself and her shortcomings, with life and its shortcomings, and with her calling to socialism and need to develop herself and help society develop in this belief. She leaves the sanatorium, although not with a light heart, with a firm step and the resolve to meet her future.

Christa Wolf penned a much more complex work than she had in *Moscow Novella*. Whereas *Moscow Novella* was much the result of constructing a story to fit within the socialist realism guidelines, *Divided Heaven* resulted from Wolf's need as an author to explore and question socialism's developments. She said, "a living, surviving society must constantly check itself – its goals, successes and failures. Literature's responsibility is to assist society in this endeavor" (Stephan 8). *Divided Heaven* is an example of Wolf's philosophy. She did not want to simply parrot the party line; she hoped to advance the socialist beliefs which were so important to her by questioning and evaluating the State's progress thus far in its attempt. Wolf was beginning to realize that State policy and opinions were not the only measures of the success of socialism, but

simply only aspects to be evaluated and constantly worked upon in the attempt of achieving an eventual socialist utopia.

It is easy to read *Moscow Novella* and find example after example of good, well-intentioned socialist realism. *Divided Heaven* requires much closer attention and searching; it is anything but a one-dimensional work, as was *Moscow Novella*. Wolf had many slight breaks from socialist realism in *Divided Heaven.* It was clear that she was searching and trying to develop a new sort of realism, one that was much different from the one she learned in her German lectures in Leipzig. She wanted her new realism to include the problems, needs and fears experienced by not only herself, but also her fellow East German citizens. Whereas small aspects of *Moscow Novella* could be considered autobiographical (Vera's age, flight from fascists, clerking for the mayor), Wolf tried to throw herself into her work in *Divided Heaven* with all that her own world included. That, according to Wolf, is the only way to reach "subjective authenticity," the only thing that renders writing legitimate (Baumer 28).

The tenets of traditional socialist realism can still be identified, for Christa Wolf, despite stretching out her creative tendrils, clearly stayed within the basic framework required by socialist realism. Very important to her in *Divided Heaven* was the objective reflection of reality, or the totality represented in the work. Presenting a clear and honest picture of life in the GDR in 1960 was absolutely essential in her quest for subjective authenticity. She included many aspects of life and accompanying problems that were faced on a daily basis by most GDR citizens. She did not want to diminish the ideals and virtues of living in a socialist society; she simply needed, as honestly as she could, to mirror truth in her writing. In *Moscow Novella*, Moscow is portrayed as breathtaking and

spiritually moving, almost only by virtue of its role and history in communism.

However, in her next work, Wolf presents Rita's new home, the industrial city of Halle as anything but beautiful:

> The wind swept unhindered across the wide, treeless valley into the city. Every child here could tell which way the wind was blowing from the smell – chemicals, malt coffee or lignite. And over everything hung a cloud of industrial waste gas which made breathing difficult. You found your way here according to the tall chimneys of the big chemical factories which stood like sentinels on the outskirts of the city. None of this was old – not even a century old. Not even the light, filtering through dust and smoke, was more than a generation or two old in this landscape (*DH,* 23-24).

Wolf did not romanticize the city of Halle, as she had done earlier with Moscow. Halle was not perfect simply because of its location in socialist Germany, and as the home of Rita and her comrades, but was imperfect, like all of them, while still a part of their lives. At the end of *Divided Heaven,* Wolf presents the reader with a slightly less flawed, but flawed nonetheless, picture of the city:

> She did not mind walking through the streets alone, seeing no one she knew. It was midday and the shops would soon be closing. She had forgotten about the noise and the crowds and she was almost afraid to plunge in. She would have to get used to the penetrating noises, colours and smells again. How could people bear it all their lives, she wondered, smiling at her country girl's notion, for she would probably see things with a townswoman's eye again the very next day (*DH,* 200).

Other realities of life in East Germany were also unpleasant but undeniable, and therefore could not be ignored by Wolf. One such reality she presents in *Divided Heaven* is the flight of many GDR citizens to the West and the broken families that resulted from them. She does not place a great amount of emphasis on the division itself which culminates in the wall towering between East and West, but rather sees the loss of citizens as a tragedy, both because their absence hurts the collective efforts of socialism, and because their souls have been lost to the virtue and purity of the system. Not only

did Manfred leave for the West in the story, but also a high ranking factory director and the entire family of one of Rita's classmates at the teaching college. Rita's friend, Sigrid, attempted in vain to hide the disappearance of her parents and siblings, for she knew that she would encounter repercussions for their actions.

Wolf used the workplace as another venue to present the day-to-day reality. The railroad car factory where Rita works is rife with controversy, conflict, betrayal and unfairness. The flaws of the system were not hidden from the reader; in fact, they are addressed at length and comprise a great deal of the story. A crisis occurs when the works' director leaves the GDR for the West and production slows and then stops. Tensions begin to run very high, and the workers quarrel and fight while they sit idle. Rita questions Meternagel about the situation and he replies:

> 'What do you think? It was sure to happen. If nobody feels responsible for anything except his own little job and nobody ever looks beyond his own nose there's bound to be a big crash some time. The purchasing department doesn't know what to buy to keep production going, supplies aren't scheduled properly, the technical plans aren't there, and nobody has the faintest notion what to do next. And on top of that, it a few items don't turn up on time, you get a colossal mess like this one' (*DH,* 52).

This was direct criticism of the way many East German workers felt about their responsibilities and the way things were handled in some of the production facilities in the GDR. Rita becomes frustrated during that time and as she learns more about the system which produced this calamity and pushed her friend Rolf Meternagel into his impossible position, she is confused and dismayed: "Rita felt that she was on the verge of growing up, that she was entering a region where only results counted, not good will, or even the effort a man put into his job if he failed at it in the end. And she rebelled against the idea" (*DH,* 59).

The situation is eventually resolved under Meternagel's leadership, after he openly rebukes one of the men in his brigade with very harsh words after the man refuses to put forth the effort required to pull their department out of its slump. He asks them to install ten window frames per shift instead of eight. "And don't tell me you can't do it," challenged Meternagel. / "Lots of things are possible," said Melcher. "But what normal person wants to foul his own nest?" / " .... Said Meternagel in a dangerously quiet voice. 'I'll tell you what's normal. Normal is what's good for all of us, what makes men of us. Abnormal is crawling, swindling and tagging along. We've been doing that long enough. But you'll never understand that – Lieutenant' " (*DH,* 71).

In this passage, Wolf manages to address two issues. She attacks the laziness and complacency found in many of the individuals she encountered. Dependency on the party and the socialist collective for success and happiness, combined with a directly related decline in feelings of personal accountability and responsibility for events were aspects of the society she was learning to abhor. Socialism should be an active journey of improvement and growth, not a protective umbrella under which people can spend their lives hiding from enemies, real or imagined. She makes this point by calling forth the attitude which was ever present during the Third Reich among the fascists. She identifies one of the men, Herbert Kuhl, Meternagel's greatest enemy, as a former Lieutenant in Hitler's army, creating a feeling of partiality, another socialist realism tenet. Although she criticizes characteristics found in many socialists and socialist institutions in the GDR, here she softens the blow by placing the roots of these characteristics in fascism. The other men see the error of their ways and desire to once again become

active, contributing members of the socialist collective by mastering the challenge presented to them by Meternagel.

There are many other examples of partiality in *Divided Heaven*, showing that Wolf's belief in the socialist party was not wavering, despite some of the criticism she was offering. The partiality in the novel is not so much imposed by the government, but represents the dedication and convictions of Wolf. For her, the socialist dream was as alive as ever, as was the desire to create a society built on a foundation of truth, tolerance of criticism and a new humanity (Buehler 119). Wolf's ability to explore a more liberal form of partiality was due, according to Buehler, to the more relaxed creative atmosphere in 1963. Partiality was not necessarily an "unquestioned subservience to party doctrine," but more an "individual commitment to work for the establishment of a socialist society that is characterized by truth" (116).

Wolf uses many different types of characters to convey partiality, in contrast to the very black and white views of her *Moscow Novella* characters. In fact, she uses Mangold, government employee turned education student, to represent what she felt was wrong with this one-dimensional view of socialism. He is replaced by individuals such as Ernst Wendland, Erwin Schwarzenbach, and Rolf Meternagel, all of whom possess certain very human flaws and occasionally err, but are nonetheless, in Rita's (and Wolf's) opinion the true paragons of a new socialism born of true inner convictions instead of party rules and limitations. On one occasion, Ernst Wendland meets up with Rita as she walks home from work and they drive together out to the country to experience some of the first signs of spring. Wendland confesses to Rita that he is supposed to be speaking at a meeting at the works, but instead would rather be with her. When she asks him what

excuse he will make the next day, he answers honestly, "I'll tell them I had to find out whether it was true that the fruit trees are in blossom, the birds are singing and there are some happy people in the world, like the radio tells us. Well, it is true, I shall say, and now we can get on with our meetings" (*DH,* 159). Although he is neglecting his duties, he is only putting them off for a while, in order to put some joy, happiness and hope into his existence. The two priorities are able to harmonize, rather than being mutually exclusive.

Erwin Schwarzenbach readily admits his early fascist activities and uses them to show the forgiving power of socialism:

> 'Even though I'm a worker's son I wanted to join the Werewolves and get myself killed when the war was nearly over. We deserved hatred then and we expected people to hate us, but the Party was patient and tolerant with us, although it expected a great deal of us, too. You know, ever since then I've had a great respect for tolerance and patience. Those are real revolutionary qualities, Comrade Mangold. Didn't you ever feel you needed them?' (*DH,* 132)

The gentle, saving power of socialism is also demonstrated in the treatment of Sigrid, whose family had fled for the West. She was certain that she would be punished for their actions, especially since she had known about it for two weeks before telling anyone. Mangold, the party dogmatist, arranged a meeting for Sigrid and Rita, who was also considered guilty by association:

> Mangold got up and talked for a long time. Rita barely listened to him, for she knew it all by heart. She felt now, as she watched him, that she could see through him and she wondered whether no one else realized what empty, silly mechanical phrases he was mouthing. She was ashamed for everybody who toadied to him (*DH,* 131).

Schwarzenbach stops Mangold short and asks him on whose behalf he is speaking. Mangold is speaking for the comrades, he states, and on behalf of a resolution.

Again Schwarzenbach interrupts, "And what's in that resolution? Does it say anything about why Sigrid acted the way she did? Does it say why she couldn't ask us for help? ... What you have to see is that the Party is there to help people like Sigrid when they need help. What else is it there for, I'd like to know?" (*DH,* 131-132)

Schwarzenbach does not shy away from expressing criticism when it he feels it is due, if it will bring society closer to the truth which is so essential to socialist fundamentals. After writing an article which criticized some of the methods used at the teaching college, he was reprimanded by his superiors:

> It was no use dictating people's opinions to them, he had written. The thing to do was to convince them that socialism was right, not to make yes-men of them . . Socialism isn't a magic formula after all. Sometimes we think we're changing something when all we are doing is giving it a different name. You've convinced me today that you can only get to people's hearts by giving them the pure, naked truth (*DH,* 196-197).

The truth was vital to Christa Wolf. Finding and sharing the truth was her purpose for writing. She recognized that there was a difference between true "moral" socialists, who had found, or at least were still seeking the truth, and the party followers, like Mangold, who simply spouted the party doctrine he had memorized. True, pure socialism was important enough to her to portray party members such as Mangold as almost as detrimental to the socialist cause as fascists or the Western capitalists. However, the Mangolds would still have a place in their society if they could find the truth. It was also for them that she was writing.

There are several positive heroes in *Divided Heaven*. Rita Seidel, naturally, along with Rolf Meternagel, Erwin Schwarzenbach, and Ernst Wendland are all, in their own ways, models in whom the reader can see various qualities of socialism flourishing. Rita Seidel, and her counterpart in the story, Manfred Herrfurth, do not simply represent East

and West, or good and bad, or socialist and capitalist. Instead they represent two different life philosophies. Manfred is portrayed as cynical, resigned, shoulder-shrugging, discouraged, opportunistic and materialistic. Manfred gives up hope and the few ideals he might have possessed when he realizes that the goals of this society will not effortlessly become reality (Stephan 48). Rita, on the other hand, represents all that can be positive in the new generation of socialists. She is active, committed, optimistic, and ready to revise the basic tenets of socialism into a meaningful, livable society (Stephan 38). The book is about her struggle to find her place and her contribution to socialism. Rita continually evolves throughout the novel, beginning as an almost disinterested, albeit model citizen, to a compassioned and dedicated member of a collective on the journey to the ideal society. Wolf does not try to portray Rita's character as perfect, instead she includes several weaknesses, ones which countless young people would have to conquer.

Although Rita was criticized by East German literary critics for her lack of opposition to Manfred's parents and her inability to stop Manfred from leaving for the West, Wolf chose her path to represent a reality which might be faced by any number of young women. Rita was young and fairly inexperienced, and she was in love for the first time in her life. It is understandable that it was difficult for her to oppose her fiancé's parents, or even place her relationship with Manfred on the line for political theories she was just beginning to understand. Her suicide attempt, perhaps the greatest flaw as seen by critics, was the climax of her self-doubt and questioning. It was a result not only of her disappointment at the end of her love affair with Manfred, but also her perhaps even greater sorrow that she and society had lost him forever to the West. Although her

choice was always clear to her, the actual decision to leave Manfred and return home was traumatic. Manfred asked her if she had no desire to see other parts of Germany, such as the Rhein, the Schwarzwald, the Bodensee. Was she willing to forgo all that existed in the other half of Germany?

> Every word he said sapped her strength. She felt weaker than ever before, and full of bitterness. A wave of longing for all those strange landscapes and faces, longing for a full life with Manfred, swept over her and almost engulfed her. Why must she be forced to make this choice. She would lose a part of herself whatever she decided (*DH,* 190).

Rita (and Wolf) accepted that socialism will entail sacrifice, which Rita, as a positive hero, is willing to make. Wolf's honesty in writing *Divided Heaven* acknowledges that the sacrifices might not always be easy to make.

Another hero, and one to whom Rita often looks for guidance, both in her duties at work, as well as devotion to the cause, was Rolf Meternagel. Although Hans-Juergen Geerdt criticizes Meternagel's character in the *Ostseezeitung* in 1963 as being a one-sided, sacrificing his health and well-being, untiring, working himself to death idealist who never reaches the fulfillment promised of socialism (Reso 45), Rita sees him as a true guidepost:

> Sometimes when she felt most desperate, those eyes were what kept her going and she realised later on that it was this haggard, dogged man who, probably more that anyone else, had saved her from succumbing completely to useless longing for a vanished dream. For she had seen him take up a big responsibility of his own free will, without thinking of any reward, and like a hero in some old legend, set out upon a seemingly hopeless struggle. He had sacrificed sleep and rest and put up with people laughing at him, quarreling with him, ignoring him. Rita had seen him in such despair that she could not believe he would ever laugh again; but he had held on grimly until the unexpected happened – the others came over on to his side … (*DH,* 69-70).

Rolf is quiet, steadfast, and determined and has seen enough experience to realize that socialism is worth fighting and sacrificing for. Although all three of the men,

Meternagel, Schwarzenbach, and Wendland are equally idealistic, Rolf, with his quiet tenacity, provides a good balance for his younger, more vocal and passionate colleagues.

The character of Ernst Wendland stresses personal accountability, a trait which Wolf found lacking in some members of society and which is easy to forget as a member of a group that is viewed as a collective. Socialism strives for equality, which, if not constantly checked, can leave individuals without a sense of ambition or accountability. Each member must feel accountable for his own efforts if the collective is to succeed. Wolf uses the workers in the railroad car factory as an example of this. Many of them were simply unwilling, or did not see the value in putting forth a maximum effort when the rewards remained the same. One day, as Manfred is bitterly complaining about how much more technologically advanced West Germany is and wonders why the East is not, Wendland asks Manfred, "Well, why aren't we?" / "You'd better ask the people who're responsible," Manfred retorts. Upon which Wendland replies, "Why don't you ask yourself?" (*DH*, 102) He realizes that not every answer can be found in party doctrine, that as a responsible socialist, one must also make independent decisions, such as the time he used a slight subterfuge to convince a supplier to keep on delivering equipment to the factory. His superiors were not happy with his methods, but were pleased that production had returned to its schedule. "Well, to make a long story short . . . they gave me a thorough talking to and I didn't say a word. What was there to say? They were right, but I was right, too. Things like that do happen" (*DH,* 104). Each and every member of a socialist society is equally responsible for its success.

Erwin Schwarzenbach is also a positive hero in the novel. As stated earlier, there is no facet more important to him in socialism than finding absolute truth. For him, truth

does not consist of merely adopting the party line as it is presented, but trying to understand and live the ideals which were the foundation for party policy in the first place. He even feels that it is possible to misuse party policy, when it is applied without an attempt to understand and help a situation, such as in the case of Sigrid.

The other two basic rules of socialist realism, national orientation and the typical, are not as clearly laid out as in *Moscow Novella*. National orientation is present, but it is more intertwined with the story, not appearing staged as some of *Moscow Novella's* passages did. The objective reflection of reality and national orientation serve together in *Divided Heaven* to join people together under socialism. By revealing many of the hardships under which citizens suffered, such as low motivation, workplace tension, divided families, and temptations of the West, Wolf managed to not only present the truth about their current situation, she also allowed them to realize that they were not alone in their problems. Christa Wolf was not able to ignore the darker, more pessimistic side of being a socialist in the 1960's, while not for a moment giving up the hope in the system she loved. Her desire to grow toward a solution to socialism's problems was strong, and she felt it necessary to unite the people so that they could collectively find their future. Additionally, in accordance with the Bitterfeld Way, Wolf told the story in both an academic as well as a factory setting, in order to appeal to and reach a large number of individuals. She was successful, for not only did the literary world react strongly to the book, so did the laboring world. A circle of writing workers (Zirkel Schreibender Arbeiter) of the very brigade in which Wolf had worked published an open letter to her in the Halle magazine, *Freiheit.* Although they felt that she omitted some of the positive aspects of their group, they praised her character development and presentation of their

trials and tribulations. They closed their letter, dated October 12, 1963, with the words, "Your book encourages contemplation. We are proud of you" (Reso 117).

The typical, the last aspect of socialist realism to be addressed, is the most difficult to find. Christa Wolf had moved beyond the stereotypical characters she created in *Moscow Novella*. There are no true stereotypes present in *Divided Heaven*, at least ones which are meant to extol the virtues of socialism. Wolf used some stereotypical characters, but these portrayed the negative influences on a possible utopia. The doctrine-spouting Mangold, the hypocritical Herr Herrfurth, and his materialistic wife are all examples of factors which might weaken the quest for political and personal happiness.

By decrying the Mangolds of the system, Wolf shied away from presenting straight party doctrine as the "universal truths" of socialism. Instead she focuses on absolute truth as the one tenet without which all else fails. Especially through Schwarzenbach, Rita and the reader are made aware of the utmost importance of pure, naked truth in governing, guiding and accepting each other as fellow brothers under socialism. The truth might not always be the easiest to accept, but it is essential in forming a society based on equality and free of hypocrisy.

The narrative style of *Divided Heaven* also showed breaks with socialist realism. Authors were encouraged to use the simplest writing styles possible, so that their message might be more accessible to the maximum number of people. Christa Wolf chose to use two techniques in the book, flashbacks and stream of consciousness, which were almost in direct opposition to the recommended narrative styles. The story begins in the present, with Rita recuperating in a hospital from her injuries, but quickly moves into the past as

Rita recounts the events of her life which led up to her accident. Initially, the breaks are quite clear, present or past ending at the chapter breaks, or at least the time shift being easily identifiable within the chapter. As the story moves along, these clear lines become muddled, and the reader must take great care to discern where present ends and past begins. Although the book becomes more and more complex, and the concentration level must increase in reading, this technique is important to show the confusion and struggle within Rita. Rita does not simply retell the story, she relives it with the reader. The shift between present and past allow the reader to sense and appreciate the incredible impact the events had on her and how she was able to regain control.

She also used stream of consciousness on a limited basis in the book, another technique which brought criticism to the work. The very first page of the story, as well as several passages toward the end, is written in stream of consciousness style. The first page is a glimpse into both the collective mind of the East Germans expressing a kind of resigned relief that the division of Germany is official and into the mind of Rita, ready to move on with her life and dreams: "We learned to sleep soundly again and to live our lives to the full, as if there were an abundance of this strange substance – life – as if it would never be used up" (*DH*, 1). This sets the stage for the novel, letting the reader know that whatever trials would be faced, it would end with hope for the future.

The use of the two techniques brought Wolf some literary praise, but also a great deal of criticism. For many, the socialist realism norm of accessibility was more important than literary skill and techniques deemed necessary to present the story (Reso 67). Others viewed the techniques used as inappropriate for they did not allow the presentation of a complete picture of society (as would a purely objective third-person

narration) and thereby the reality aspect of the novel was damaged (65). Wolf's motive for using these two techniques could not have been to defy socialist realism rules; her interest lay only in presenting her story in the most truthful, powerful way she could.

Two critics in particular, Dietrich Albert and Herbert Wetzelt, were extremely vociferous in their criticism of Wolf and *Divided Heaven*. They attacked her on many levels in the magazine *SED Freiheit* of August 31, 1963. They tried to cast a shadow on Wolf and her work by claiming that some of the weaknesses observed in *Divided Heaven,* resulted from a lack of political conviction on Wolf's part. They continued that she was not fulfilling her role in conveying the all-powerful and all-changing power of socialism to the reader (68). For other critics, *Divided Heaven* was just one of several fictional works under attack in the early 1960's because they did not closely adhere to points 1-5 of socialist realism. However, there were also defenders of these works, such as Werner Ilberg, who commented that often aspects such as partiality did not have to be superficially imposed on a work, but instead strongly and authentically permeated the stories (109).

Wolf received this reprimand after *Divided Heaven's* publication: "Remember your origins and think about our advancement, if you and your clever pen want to serve the German working class, its party and the matter of socialism" (Buehler 131). However, most official comments were positive, such as that of the Central Committee of the SED. They recommended *Divided Heaven* stating: "Today's youth reads such books with great joy and inner participation, books in which the conflicts of our lives are portrayed truthfully and optimistically" (Reso 100). The East Berlin Academy of the

Arts called the book "a meaningful witness to the truth that life in our times with its inner and outward conflicts has become more worth living and more worth loving" (105).

The publication of novels such as *Divided Heaven* was certainly facilitated by the effects of de-Stalinization occurring after Khrushchev's February 1956 denunciation of Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Even Walter Ulbricht, a staunch supporter of the former dictator claimed that Stalin had "stifled creative thinking and initiative" (Dennis 26-27). That there might be some controversy after the publication of *Divided Heaven* was probably clear to Wolf, but her desire to spread its message and help her fellow citizens was more important. Her departure from socialist realism which can be seen beginning in *Divided Heaven,* was not the result of a conscious decision to defy the political system and the SED. Instead, she hoped to help the system and its believers, her brothers and sisters in socialism.

V. *The Quest for Christa T.*

In 1964, Wolf received the National Prize III. Class of the Academy of the Arts of the GDR and gave a speech at the second Bitterfeld conference, although that movement was dissolved shortly thereafter. The cultural ministry had decided that it was much more important for authors to intensify their efforts in developing a socialist German national literature (Hilzinger 16), which might serve to unite East Germans on the basis of their national identity, thus creating a stronger base for socialism. The next year, Wolf became a member of the Pen Center of the GDR, participated in the 11th Plenum of the SED, and went on a reading tour in Finland. However, by 1967 her name had been

dropped from the list of party candidates for the Central Committee, and in 1968, she was formally reprimanded by the East German government and the Writers' Union.

The 1960's, and particularly the second half of that decade, were a time of great change for Christa Wolf and literature throughout East Germany. Previously, the literature had portrayed the transition from capitalism and fascism to socialism. Now it depicted contemporary life in the GDR (Buehler 132). It became much more common to depict hardships and difficulties experienced by many individuals in the GDR. The focus went from adherence to the strict guidelines of socialist realism and blind faith in the political system as it then existed, to a deep interest in individuals. Although her support for East Germany and socialism did not waver, Wolf began to assume a role of watchful and critical judge, showing concern and criticism for the state's attempt to mold human beings into conformity as can be seen in her next work, *Nachdenken ueber Christa T.* (*The Quest for Christa T.*). In 1968, 94.49% of the population voted for a socialist constitution (Allinson 145). According to Allinson, although conformity and obedience by the citizens had risen by this time, this was a learned behavior, not reflecting a true commitment (146).

The cultural thaw following de-Stalinization, the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, and economic reforms in 1962-1963 did not last long (Krisch 131). Khrushchev's fall from power in October 1964 led to a more controlled and conservative mood in Moscow. Erich Honecker, already considered a likely successor for Ulbricht, eagerly embraced this mood (Childs 72-73). Any hopes for new opportunities for free expression were dashed when Honecker attacked the "harmful tendencies" in the arts at the Eleventh SED Central Committee Plenum in 1965 (Krisch 131). Ulbricht also clearly

stated in April 1965 that "only literature which supported the wider political and economic goals of the SED would be considered acceptable" (Wallace 111). There was a return to strict ideological guidelines, which accounted for the difficulties Wolf had in publishing *The Quest for Christa T.* (Turner 140-141).

Life was still very difficult for the average citizen in the GDR. They were well aware of the lifestyle and amenities their western counterparts possessed, and the slightly higher living standard after implementation of the Economic Reforms resulted in "higher social needs and consumer expectations" (Bathrick 29). In 1960, only 6% of GDR households had refrigerators or washing machines (Turner 139). Less than 40% of East German dwellings had a bath or shower and an indoor toilet at that time (Dennis 62). Prior to 1967, a six-day work week was common, which still did not afford East Germans a purchasing power comparable to that in the West. The situation resulted in a feeling of lack of personal fulfillment and optimism which pervaded society and then literature. This unhappiness left individuals doubting their ability to contribute to the common cause which led the way for themes which dealt with self-actualization of individuals in GDR society. This self-actualization did not necessarily result merely from being fully integrated into the society, but by first coming to terms with oneself on a deeply personal level. Authors began to address the conflicts between the demands the state made on its citizens for political and economic gains and the rights of individuals to feel personally fulfilled (Buehler 132).

The narrative techniques used by Wolf in *Divided Heaven* which had caused such a furor, such as stream of consciousness, flashbacks and foreshadowing became much more common in GDR literature as the 1960's progressed. Christa Wolf and her newly

published *The Quest for Christa T.* were not alone. Authors such as Werner Braeuning, Gerd Bieler, Peter Hacks and Irmtraud Morgner, and others, also produced works reflecting the new philosophy of self-development and utilizing more complex narrative styles (133).

The publication chronology for *The Quest for Christa T.* was anything but smooth. Wolf's first and second versions of 1965 and 1967 were rejected by the censors for reasons not noted by scholars quoted here, and only after revision did the novel finally appear on East German bookshelves in 1969 (Finney 31). Parts of the book had been read on East German Radio and also published in *Sinn und Form*, which served to pique the interest of GDR readers. By the time the book was actually published it met with a great demand. The hesitancy of East German officials to publish this book was widely known and also helped it to become an instant bestseller in West Germany as well (31-32).

While *Divided Heaven* unleashed a huge debate in East Germany between politicians and critics alike, *The Quest for Christa T.* was somewhat ignored. The novel was even omitted from the study *Zur Theorie des sozialistischen Realismus der DDR* of 1974 (von Ankum 120). The discussion on *The Quest for Christa T.* limited itself mainly to critics in the literary field, where opinions were varied and strong. The book met with a great lack of understanding, which caused Wolf much distress (Kahn 56).

Part of the reason for this misunderstanding might have resulted from the shift in Wolf's perspective and her reason for writing the book. Whereas her earlier works *Moscow Novella* and *Divided Heaven* focused on the outcome of the story, in *The Quest for Christ T.*, the process of writing it down, the search itself for the main character, is the

outcome (58). Wolf described the book as an attempt to motivate people to "find themselves" (*Selbstfindung)*, which she stressed is the shared goal of socialism and literature: "I see the deep roots of the harmony between true literature and socialist society in that both have the goal of helping man to fully realize himself" (von Ankum 102-3). She called the opinion "absurd" that socialist literature must distance itself from nuances of feelings and ignore differences of character (103).

After the accusations that followed the publication of *Divided Heaven*, as well as the complicated publication history of *The Quest for Christa T.*, she realized that she would meet with intense personal criticism for her newest book. Since this criticism would be completely unfounded, she tried to weaken it before it could start and clearly presented herself as a devoted socialist in the essay *Lesen und Schreiben* which appeared in 1968: "The need to write in a new form results, even with a time lapse, from the new form of existing in the world" (103). Therese Hornigk, critic, seemed to agree with the statement and understand Wolf when she found that *The Quest for Christa T.* was not the result of a personal, ideological misunderstanding on the part of Christa Wolf, but that it was the beginning of a new GDR literature. This literature no longer emphasized only the economic growth of socialism, but also included the importance of the duty to moral growth as well (119).

In writing *The Quest for Christa T.,* Wolf abandoned all earlier notions of presenting the socialist society of the GDR in all of its glory, with perhaps few of its faults to maintain a perspective of reality, and proclaiming its superiority and near perfection as a government and a way of life. She turned away from that, concentrating her efforts on the individuals in this society, concerned for their needs, dreams, hopes and

happiness. She had found flaws in the way the current regime neglected to respect and honor the individuals of whom the GDR consisted, and how it increasingly focused on the sum of the efforts of the people, and not the people themselves. Wolf's socialism never believed in the devaluing of individuals for the purpose of the party, but instead stressed the importance of the strength of a unified effort. *The Quest for Christa T.* served as a reminder to all that the collective of socialism can only be as strong and healthy as each member in it.

The Quest for Christa T. is vastly different from Wolf's earlier works. In it, she attempts to recreate the short life of a woman through the words of a narrator who knew her. The book is not overtly political, as were her earlier works. Instead, the focus is on the life of Christa T. and the events and people who surrounded her during her 35 years of life. The book requires very close reading, which conflicts with socialist realism's rule of accessibility. It is often difficult to ascertain who is speaking, for the words and thoughts of the narrator and Christa T. often blend into each other, and the reader is left to guess where one left off and the other began. Characters appear and disappear without warning or previous introduction and some relationships between characters are never truly established. Conversations are recorded by the narrator, only for her to later admit that they never occurred; they were mere suppositions, or sometimes wishful thinking, on her part. The chronology in the novel is, at best, vague. The novel begins after Christa T. has died, as the narrator attempts to explain her reasons and processes for recording the life of Christa T. Events and characters are depicted before they occurred or were introduced, as in the mention of Christa T.'s husband long before she meets him. Although large portions of the book are devoted to certain periods in her life, such as her

childhood, her student years, and her marriage and family, the reader never knows when to expect an event long in the past or yet to occur within these sections.

In using this style of writing, Wolf very clearly presents the narrator's attempt to recreate Christa T. and allows the reader access into her thoughts. It is not (and cannot be) a simple, streamlined process. The narrator uses her own memory as well as writings, letters, and diaries of Christa T. A finished product is not really necessary; the desire and attempt to recreate the person and honor her struggle and development are enough, and Wolf describes beautifully the process of searching for her. This narrative style represents an absolute break from the usual tidiness of socialist realism literature, the first break of many to be found in *The Quest for Christa T.*

The book begins as the narrator talks about Christa T, and her reasons for writing down her life. She is terrified at the thought of this life, with its trials and tribulations, as well as its successes, happiness and dreams, disappearing forever, with no record of her ever being, as the world continues all around:

> I feel that she is disappearing. There she lies in her village cemetery, beneath the two buckthorn bushes, dead among the dead. What is she doing there? Six feet of earth on top of her, and the Mecklenburg sky above, the larks calling in springtime, summer storms, the winds in autumn, and the snow. She's disappearing. No ears now to hear complaints with; no eyes to see tears with; no mouth with which to answer reproaches (*CT,* 3).

It is of the utmost importance to find Christa T. and give her life some permanence. It is not only for the sake of their friendship and the life that was lived, there is a larger, more urgent purpose to the narrator's endeavor. Wolf's concern for the individuals of society is great and she finds it imperative that the proper attention be given to each one. The life of Christa T. must be a reminder to all who have forgotten the struggle to become who one is meant to be, a reminder for both the government as well as

the people: "Useless to pretend it's for her sake. Once and for all, she doesn't need us. So we should be certain of one thing: that it's for our sake. Because it seems that we need her" (*CT,* 5).

The narrator shows how difficult it is to recreate Christa T. She compares the search to find and record Christa T.'s life with the search that all humans should undertake for themselves and the quest that each person has for self-actualization and fulfillment. She is uncertain as to when she should rely on memory, which she readily admits is "deceptive", but also cannot completely trust the facts. This is an endeavor which will consume her and to which she will devote her whole being:

> Therefore, one cannot, unfortunately, cling to the facts, which are too mixed up with chance and don't tell much. But it also becomes harder to keep things separate: what one knows with certainty, and since when; what she herself revealed, and what others revealed; what her writings add and what they hide; and what it is that one has to invent, for the truth's sake: the truth of that being who does now appear to me at times, and whom I approach with caution … I can now hear words that we never spoke. Now I can see her as she was, Christa T., when no witnesses are present. Could it be possible?—The years that re-ascend are no longer the years they were. Light and shadow fall once more over our field of vision: but the field is ready. Should that not amaze us? (*CT,* 23)

When the narrator meets Christa T. in 1944, they are both schoolgirls during the Hitler regime before they were forced to flee from the Red Army. It was clear from the very beginning that Christa T. was different, that she possessed an "otherness" that her fellow students could not and did not want to understand. She appeared unconcerned with approval and even arrogant, although not disrespectful. In this era of absolute conformity with rules and power, she was viewed with disfavor and distrust. The prospects for the eventual friendship between the narrator and Christa T. seem very slight as the narrator, a model young girl of the time, regards her with utter disdain and mistrust, for Christa T. has begun to challenge the structure of her world:

> I could see the gym teacher with the marker pennons marking out her everlasting ball-game field; it was more pleasing to look at that than at the way this newcomer treated our teacher. The way she kept the reins on her, turning the interrogations, which would have been statutory, into a conversation, and how she even decided what the class was to talk about. … The air was thick with betrayal. But who was the traitor, who was being betrayed? (*CT*, 7)

This distance and disdain changed dramatically with an incident several months later when a group of classmates are walking though the city on their way to the movies. Christa T., who had been walking, as usual, slightly apart from and in front of the group, suddenly places a rolled newspaper to her mouth and lets out a shout like the sound of a trumpet. Although the narrator initially reacts as all the others did, with a smile and a shake of the head, she later is able to see that as a turning point in her life and her perspective of that life: "Never, never again did I want to stand outside the town park, outside the fenced-in deer meadow, on a day without any sunshine—and it was another person who'd let go with that shout which erased everything and for a fraction of a second lifted the sky up higher" (*CT,* 11). The narrator loses her love of conformity and begins to see the necessity of opening up one's sight to life. "Rapidly and regardlessly I had broken all other threads; suddenly I felt, with a sense of terror, that you'll come to a bad end if you suppress all the shouts prematurely; I had no time to lose. I wanted to share in a life that produced such shouts as her *hooohaahooo*, about which she must have knowledge" (*CT*, 11).

The two become tentative friends, with Christa T. controlling the friendship and only revealing to the narrator what she wants her to know. The narrator spends much of her time and effort in an attempt to get closer to Christa T., to cement their friendship, something which eludes her at that point in her life. The two eventually separate as they are forced to flee their town in 1945 but meet again seven years later, both students in the

same lecture hall at the university. Little is learned about the narrator's life during those seven years; Christa T. taught for three years before deciding to apply to the university where they meet again. They rekindle their friendship which is now a warm one, and one that will continue for the next fourteen years until Christa T.'s death. They both continue their studies, grow into adulthood, make friends, and find love. Their friendships, relationships and love interests are recorded, some more detailed and others only intimated. Throughout, Christa T. remains elusive and a mystery to her friends and classmates. She often neglects her coursework, choosing instead to read classic literature and search for its meaning to life. Although her grades are less than satisfactory, her final thesis on Theodor Storm is marked "very good".

Both women eventually marry and have children. Christa T. becomes the wife of a small town veterinarian, a role that seemingly becomes her. She settles into her role as housewife and mother after the birth of her three children. Shortly after that, she succumbs to leukemia and dies. In terms of events, Christa T. led a fairly normal life, one that can be summed up in a few words by the narrator: "Another thirteen years. Four successive addresses. Two jobs. A Husband, three children. A Journey. Sicknesses, landscapes" (*CT,* 60). However, that very life, filled with everyday events, was valuable, and worth preserving and learning from. That was the motivation and desire of both the narrator and Christa Wolf. Christa T. may not have been an ideal citizen or socialist, but she lived, she struggled, and she loved. As a member of their society, she was worthy of recognition and support. Her life must be made important, even with its failure to fit in exactly where it should have in the eyes of the others. Christa Wolf hoped to convince others of this importance.

As stated earlier, *The Quest for Christa T.* shows a complete break with the tenets of socialist realism without, however, demonstrating any kind of a break with socialist philosophy. Wolf's commitment and connection to socialism remained strong, and her hope was equally strong that socialism would be the society in which individuals could be allowed to develop personally.

The objective reflection of reality is the first tenet of socialist realism to fall away in Wolf's novel. An essential part of this tenet required that the advancement of socialist society be portrayed in a realistic, believable way. *The Quest for Christa T.* breaks from this due to the fact that the novel deals with only one character, Christa T. and her immediate, personal world. She is a woman who simply does not fit in with this society. As shown in *Moscow Novella* and *Divided Heaven* by the personal sacrifices made by Vera and Rita for the sake of the totality of socialism, individual needs were relegated to a much lower position on the scale of importance. By departing from the "we" idea and shifting to the "I" perspective needed for self-actualization, *The Quest for Christa T.* utterly abandons the reality the guidelines of socialist realism wish to preserve.

Wolf's motives are two-fold in the writing of *The Quest for Christ T.* Despite her claim in *Selbstinterview* that all characters are fictional (Finney 34), she states elsewhere that she wishes to remember someone close to her who died too soon (von Ankum 102). On a broader level, the book can be used by the people of the GDR as a reminder not to forget themselves and their personal development in the often overwhelming pressure for conformity. It is also an admonishment to the powers that be for attempting to exact this conformity (Buehler 135). Christa Wolf needed to write this book, and in doing so rejected the purpose of literature set down by the proponents of socialist realism. *The*

Quest for Christa T. was as much of a lesson for herself as for her fellow socialists. In *The Fourth Dimension*, she states that writing should not be viewed as an end product, "but as a process which continuously runs alongside life, helping to shape and interpret it: writing can be seen as a way of being more intensely involved in the world" (21).

Wolf did not completely neglect all details of reality. Although most likely not welcomed by the SED censors, she included the Hungarian revolt of October 1956 and the subsequent actions of the Soviet army in the following month. Christa T. and her circle of friends were deeply affected and saddened by the events, not only for the tragic loss of life, but also, as they later realized, for the loss of innocence:

> We didn't know what that night meant; it has taken us years to find out. Except that the struggles of the older generation became our own struggles; we felt this at once and very distinctly. And that they wouldn't allow us to retreat into the roles of dupes. But the role of the iron believer was now defunct as well; the stage on which such roles had been played was plunged in darkness. Yes, there had been a sudden change in the lighting and we hadn't foreseen it. Only later did we ask ourselves: and why not? That night, over our tea, which got cold, while the sneering voices gathered in our room, we noticed only the darkening of the world, and didn't notice that what had been extinguished was only the spotlights, and that we'd have to get used now to seeing by the sober light of real days and nights (*CT*, 133).

The totality aspect of socialist realism is strongly negated in the novel. Socialism, within the guideline of objective reflection of reality, was to be presented in a way showing the totality of the system, appearing as a shining, flawless jewel, a picture of complete perfection. Several instances in the novel point to the absence of a static, fixed entity called socialism with its neatly laid down rules in black and white. Christa T. emphasizes this way of thinking when bantering with a boyfriend: "Completely is your favorite word, isn't it? Christa T. asks.

You're the only person who asks questions like that, he says, quietly and bitterly. I've noticed it: you don't like things to be completely right or completely in order.

You're wrong there, she says gravely. I'd have liked it a lot of I'd ever found it anywhere" (*CT*, 39).

According to Christa T., there could be no totality in life, not even in socialism. Wolf uses Christa T. to emphasize the importance of developing and becoming, not only as an individual, but also as a society. There is never a moment of perfection or completion, the journey there is the goal:

> Later she often repeated this procedure—of going away—and there's a pattern to be read here, even on first sight: you leave what you know too well, leave what has ceased to be a challenge. Keep alive your curiosity about other ranges of experience, and ultimately about yourself in any new circumstances. Prefer the movement to the goal (*CT*, 41).

Wolf stresses again the value in not allowing oneself or one's surroundings to become stagnant. This movement, this continual development is crucial to her view of the world, which she shows through Christa T:

> Christa T. said she didn't like things to be fixed: that everything, once it's out there in existence—even this phrase which puts it out there—is so difficult to get moving again, so one should try in advance to keep it alive while it's still in the process of coming to be, in oneself. It must keep on *originating*, that's what matters. One should never, never let it become something finished (*CT*, 167).

Partiality is the second tenet of socialist realism which was not observed as SED critics would have wished. Many critics were outraged at the lack of partiality it *The Quest for Christa T.* Max Walter Schulz found that the (in his opinion) anti-socialist basis of the book was not only itself damaging to society, but also provided "hostile critics with the ammunition to attack the GDR and its socialist ideology" (Buehler 140). However, nothing had changed in Wolf's dedication; she remained an ardent socialist.

She simply felt the need to criticize shortcomings she saw in current practices of society and its SED leaders. She stopped viewing socialism and the SED as one and the same.

According to Buehler, Wolf opposed three things:

1) That the new socialist society must be established at any price, even the complete loss of individuality

2) The tendencies to implement socialist society by coercion and duress of its citizens

3) The forced, staged demonstrations to promote socialism and denounce capitalism around the world (143).

Despite the vehement criticism for the lack of partiality in *The Quest for Christa T.*, Christa T. was indeed a socialist, something that she herself felt and that was observed on several occasions by the narrator. She was, perhaps, not the quintessential positive hero that the literary and SED critics would like to have seen, but was, nevertheless, a believer in what socialist society could offer and wished to play a role in its development:

> For the new world that we were making and making unassailable—even if it meant building ourselves into the foundations of it—that world really did exist. It exists, and not only in our heads; and that period was for us the beginning of it. But whatever happened or will happen to that new world is and remains our affair. Among the alternatives offered there isn't a single one that's worth a nod in its direction … What she wished for more intensely than anything… was the coming of our world; and she had precisely the imagination one needs for a real understanding of it (*CT,* 51).

Christa T.'s desire to be a part of this new world was very strong. She felt an intense longing to be essential in its development. Even though she would most likely always be different in many ways from the others around her, she still hoped to find some concrete validation in her efforts: "What does this world need to become perfect?"

This and this alone was the question which wrapped her up in herself; but more deeply still it was the presumptuous hope that she, Christa T. herself, might be necessary for the world's perfection. Nothing less than this could validate her life; ..." (*CT*, 53).

Wolf uses Christa T.'s desire to participate in socialism to express quiet criticism of the SED for neglecting to value the worth of the individual in society and its tendency to view people only as the sum of their efforts. Christa T. wished to be recognized, not only for what she did or might do for socialism, but also for who she was with its collective:

> When her name was called: "Christa T.!"—she stood up and went and did what was expected of her; was there anyone to whom she could say that hearing her name called gave her much to think about: Is it really me who's meant? Or is it only my name that's being used? Counted in with other names, industriously added up in front of the equals sign? And might I just as well have been absent, would anyone have noticed? She saw, too, how people began to slip away, leaving only the shell of a name behind. She couldn't do that (*CT*, 55).

Christa T. again shows her care and concern for socialism, when, in the role of teacher, she assigns an essay to her students on the topic of "Am I too young to contribute to socialist society?" The picture Wolf paints here of East German young people is very realistic. Mark Allinson describes some of the attitudes of parents and students in the 1960's. They opposed obligatory Russian lessons instead of English and the monopoly of the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (76). This continued through the decade with some student groups attempting to discover a "third way" between socialism and capitalism (129). Christa T. is devastated at her students' responses and frustrated at her inability to give them failing grades. The students are aware of her helplessness and mock her. One student writes a glowing essay about the contributions that can be made as a member of the Youth Association. As she reminds him that he is not even a member of the

organization, his flippant response and shrugging shoulders wound her to the core of her being. She meets with the principal to discuss the incident, seeking guidance and support which she does not receive as she had hoped. He does, however, comfort her with the remark "...don't you ever forget it—what we have brought into this world can never be driven out of it." Her step is lighter on her way home. "She's suddenly glad that she has wishes which go beyond herself and beyond the time that I shall see in this life, she tells herself. She'd never thought of it before. She's grateful to that man, the principal, and not in the way that she might have been grateful to the image she had of him. She's grateful to him for her wishes. He helped pay for them" (*CT,* 106).

Wolf, as the narrator, also criticizes the herd mentality of the GDR, the manipulation of great masses of citizens for the use of propagating the party line of the SED without particularly caring if these words and gestures hold any deeper meaning for its citizens:

> But she also lost the capacity to live in a state of rapture. The vehement overplayed words, the waving banners, the deafening songs, the hands clapping rhythms over our heads. She felt how words began to change when they aren't being tossed out any more by belief and ineptitude and excessive zeal but by calculation, craftiness, the urge to adapt and conform (*CT,* 56).

The only instance of the former type of partiality found in *The Quest for Christa T.* can be found when Christa T. and Justus visit his relatives in the Federal Republic. His relatives appear comical in their condescending demeanor towards Christa T. and Justus:

> Then a few aunts come in, with a wave of sympathy, and terrible words tumble from their candid lips. Terror, they say, eating nutcake, you poor souls, they treat you so you don't even miss It ... Miss who did you say? the cousin asks. Aunt Hermine's face fills with reproof: Not who, my dear, she says; and from her mouth comes, mysteriously, the watchword: Freedom! (*CT,* 127)

This episode appears to serve two purposes. By stressing the relatives' very limited, distorted view of freedom, it not only demonstrates Wolf's disdain and disapproval of capitalism, it also provides some comic relief at the expense of Justus' bumbling, tactless relatives.

National orientation is a guideline that somewhat falls by the wayside, not necessarily by Wolf's design, but because of her focus on the importance of the person, rather than the place. As Buehler remarks, "the GDR and its socialist society only provide the canvass upon which Christa Wolf reveals the eternal struggle confronting all human beings" (147). She does, however, in the voice of the narrator, appeal to her generation and their special role in the forming of their socialist state: "It gives one a good feeling to be at the beginning of things. One loves that feeling and one's only anxiety comes with the fear that one might fail to live up to the passions at large in society. Like ourselves, Christa T. had the luck to be forced to create the identity at an age when one is passionate" (*CT*, 132-133).

Christa Wolf, in *The Quest for Christa T.,* completely rejects the typical. By focusing on Christa T., the loner, who struggles to swim against the stream with regard to those all around her, she is decrying the validity of the typical. Christa T. is an exception to every rule as she valiantly opposes, from her early childhood on, being swept into a mass with identical likes, dislikes, priorities and beliefs. The group, posing as the typical, fails to understand this. Allowing herself to be assimilated into the group would be hindrance to her self-actualization.

There is no single character in *The Quest for Christa T.* who possesses the qualifications to be considered a positive hero. In fact, the book not only lacks any such

characters, it contains, at least in SED terms, "the incarnation of the anti-hero in GDR-literature" (Buehler 151). She contradicts any and all characteristics a socialist realism hero should and must have. She has no desire to be a part of the collective and appears weak, buffeted along by fate and her own inability to become the master of her fate. She is much more concerned with personal fulfillment and finding the core of herself, before she is confident enough to become an active, productive member of society.

From the beginning of the novel, Christa T. is anything other than a hero. Her distance from her classmates and her study colleagues was clear and well-defined. She also viewed herself as different. In her notes, the narrator finds a self-description written by Christa T. which emphasizes her difference:

> *Sternkind—kein Herrnkind:* who could have said that? Later she wrote it down: Child of a star, not a great gentleman's child. Without comment. She wrote it down among the certainties. She knew: it was true. But it wouldn't have been right to waste any words on it. *Sternkind.* Which doesn't necessarily mean a lucky child, Sunday's child. Not every star shines brightly and persistently. One has heard of difficult stars, with a changing light, disappearing, returning, not always visible (*CT,* 17, 19).

Despite the fact that they are close friends, a small distance always remains between the narrator and Christa T., a distance that can never be closed, kept open in part by Christa T.'s lack of decisiveness and definite purpose: "It occurs to me that we could never ask her: What are you going to be? One can ask this of others without fear of touching on something impossible to express" (*CT,* 34). Her response to this question showed that having a definite purpose was not of great concern to her. "Well? ... Me? Teacher, maybe? she might ask. One gave up, said nothing more, let the matter rest, didn't insist on anything definite, because it was perfectly plain—she really couldn't know" (*CT,* 35).

The narrator cares deeply for Christa T. and values her friendship greatly, but also recognizes that she can never fill the typical role required by their society, but not letting this diminish her worth as a person.

> She, Christa T., to whom we can't apply a single one of the laudatory words which our time and we ourselves have quite justifiably produced. Although one or two of them might suit her a little, perhaps more than a little, albeit their usual sense would have to be changed ... It would never have occurred to me, I swear, to think of her as an exemplary person. For she isn't an exemplary case at all (*CT,* 45).

Finally, the narrator looks for reasons for the chasm between Christa T., others around her, and society. This chasm saddens both her and Christa T. Although she in no way resembles a positive hero, Christa T.'s intentions are good, and her dreams of a socialist society are true. She simply could not bridge the vastness that existed between her world and that around her. In a real or perhaps imagined conversation between the narrator and former fellow student Gertrud Born Doelling, the latter exclaims: "This ocean of sadness! Simply because people didn't want to be as she saw them." To which the narrator responds, "Or, I shall suggest, because she couldn't be as we wanted her to be?" (*CT,* 49)

Neither Christa T. the character, nor her story, *The Quest for Christa T.*, was able to be as the literary public at large wanted them to be either. The expanse of the critical storm was smaller than with *Divided Heaven,* but no less intense. The type of criticism offered by reviewers ran the gamut, for many were simply not able to completely understand the complex composition of the book. For the most part, the critics were a group of people who were accustomed to writers who basically followed the guidelines of socialist realism, including the idea that literature should be composed as simply as possible to provide accessibility to all who encountered it, from the most learned

professors to less-educated laborers. Critics were simply not ready for the complicated style of *The Quest for Christa T.* With no clear story pattern and a timeline that criss-crossed itself repeatedly, as well as a complete deviation from the five basic tenets of socialist realism, the readers were simply overwhelmed. Misinterpretation and confusion were inevitable, obscuring the valuable message intended by Wolf.

Wolf and other authors were criticized at the 10. Plenum of the Central Committee of the SED. Her publisher, Heinz Sachs, immediately distanced himself from Wolf and her newest book, saying that it was contrary to the traditions and purpose of the publisher (von Ankum 106).

Horst Haase of *Neue Deutsche Literatur*, like many others, attempted to filter out the facts from Christa T.'s story. As stated earlier, due to the complicated, unstructured, and interwoven nature of the narrative style, this was nearly impossible. He searched for some kind of clarity in the work, and criticized the fact that no great discussion took place between the narrator and Christa T, which could have made some of the unsaid points clearer. The distance between the two that never completely closed had a negative impact on the (socialist) message this book could have conveyed (112-113).

Another misinterpretation that occurred was the theory that the book was completely "unpolitical, intimate, on the fringe of society" (123). Many GDR critics felt that Wolf was pulling away from politics in *The Quest for Christa T.* This was not true. According to Anna Kahn in her book, *Christa Wolf's Utopian Vision*, Wolf was writing in accordance with Marx's ideals of "developed individuality." Kahn claims that GDR critics' inability to see the novel make this connection was a clear indication of how

distant they had become from Marx and his humanistic goals, in favor of economic and political advancement (Kahn 52).

Kahn was not the only one to recognize the importance of self-actualization and the government's responsibility to aid its citizens in this endeavor. GDR critic Haase surprisingly commented on this topic in a very positive way. Despite the lack of structure, he was impressed by the modern style which conveyed the strong affinity of the narrator to the feelings and moods of Christa T. He found that Wolf, despite the book's subjectivity, emphasized that the attempted self-actualization of Christa T would only have been possible in socialist society: "We need this Christa T., we need her now because humanistic responsibility to society and oneself, moral decisiveness in thought and action and the distinct sentiments of creative subjectivity of man are becoming ever more important to our socialist development" (von Ankum 111).

Also positive were the comments of Herman Kaehler, reviewer at *Sinn und Form.* He chose to view the work as an elegy and that was the reason that Wolf used a "fragmented representation." *The Quest for Christa T.* was not a decadent self-mirroring, but was concerned with another's well-being. "The story was filled with warmth through the last line by the responsibility for and with one another. Thinking about one's fellow man was a duty of socialism, one, that in the case of Christa T., came too late" (110).

However, the majority of the criticism was negative, and claimed that Christa Wolf was anti-socialist and anti-GDR. One of the most memorable, biting criticisms came from West German critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki who stated, "Christa T. died of leukemia, but her true ailment was socialism" (122). The work was also officially denounced by the cultural functionary at the VI. *Parteitag*, not only for its supposed anti-

socialist message but also because it resembled the literature of the West at that time (114).

The Quest for Christa T. has become the most frequently reviewed book by critics in the Federal Republic, where some of its popularity came from the misinterpretation of Wolf's motives as anti-socialist. However, many were able to recognize her motives as she had intended. Rosemarie Saupe stated: "The theme of whether or not one should fit in plays an important role. Isn't that a question of human life everywhere?" (von Ankum 126) *The Quest for Christa T.* was a novel that could be taken out of the context of the GDR and applied anywhere. *Moscow Novella* and *Divided Heaven* were both received within a political context in the Federal Republic. *The Quest for Christa T.* was received there generally as independent of any system and more on a literary level. With this book, Wolf distanced herself from the current political system and began to be a proponent of a humanistic and moralistic basis (136).

The most influential interpretation from the west was written by Andreas Huyssen in 1975. In accordance with Wolf's beliefs, he maintained that socialism was the forum where Christa Wolf and Christa T. could attain and realize their great hopes. Unfortunately, he realized, she was not understood by those around her. Christa T. had in no way abandoned socialism. She had merely shifted her perspective based on her own personal growth as a writer and an individual. She had great hopes and concerns for the members of their society, not just the society itself. Without the fulfillment, purpose, and personal identity of its members, even a socialist society could be nothing more than a shell surrounding great unhappiness. More than ever, Wolf believed in socialism and hoped for its future. With *The Quest for Christa T.*, she had

merely begun to doubt and express criticism that the existing government of the GDR was fulfilling its duty and responsibility to its citizens by encouraging and enabling their personal growth. Christa T. was not anti-socialist, or even anti-GDR. She was searching for her own personal way to serve in the quest for a more humane socialist world.

VI. Conclusion

After Wolf's complete departure from the strict confines of socialist realism in *The Search for Christa T.*, she never went back. She went on to publish such works as *Kindheitsmuster* (1976), *Selbstversuch* (1980), *Kassandra* (1983), *Sommerstueck* (1989), and of course, the very controversial *Was Bleibt* in 1990. Her acclaim grew worldwide and she received numerous prizes and awards, particularly in the Federal Republic such as the Literature Prize of the City of Bremen (1977), Schiller Prize (1983), Franz Nobl Prize of the City of Graz (1984), and the Austrian National Prize for European Literature (1985). She was invited to join many different artistic organizations, for example the German Academy for Language and Literature, Academy of the Arts in West Berlin, European Academy of Arts and Sciences in Paris, and the Free Academy of the Arts in Hamburg. She continued to grow and develop as a writer, and moved onto topics such as her own past, feminism, romantic writers and science.

After *The Quest for Christa T.*, her relationship with the SED never fully recovered. As early as 1965 she confided in a letter to a fellow writer that she could not let herself be manipulated and stray from the path she believed in as the right way by political pressure: "We [as authors] must represent people in complete clarity and not

altered by our wishful thinking, good intentions and least of all by preconceived notions of society" (Baumer 39).

An event that irrevocably changed her standing with the SED was the Wolf Biermann incident. Wolf Biermann was accused of GDR-damaging, anti-socialist behavior and sympathizing with the enemy. According to Baumer, this was an absurd accusation – the vision of socialism had been perverted to a dictatorship of fanatics and bureaucrats, in order to render the people powerless, the people whose rights and freedoms were meant to be protected by classical communism (56-57). According to *Neues Deutschland* in November 1976, a resolution supporting the expatriation of Wolf Biermann was signed by 110 East German authors. However, an "open letter" protesting this event appeared signed by more than 100 authors. The first two signatures were those of Christa and Gerhard Wolf. Up to that point still in relatively good standing with the SED, they were asked to revise their anti-socialist position which they did not. Their position was criticized and judged by the Berlin chapter of the Writers' Union of the GDR as serving the anti-communist enemy. Shortly thereafter, she left the Writers' Union and her husband officially withdrew from the SED. The Wolf Biermann incident demonstrates her strength of character against the unjust demands of the SED state and her ability to maintain her beliefs despite enormous pressure and most likely some feelings of guilt.

This occurrence precipitated a crisis for Wolf and others in her artistic circle in 1976. In Anna Kuhn's article "*Zweige vom selben Stamm?,*" Wolf is quoted by Kuhn as to her frame of mind as she wrote *Kein Ort. Nirgends* in 1977. "I wrote [it] in 1977. At that time I was living with the strong feeling of having my back against the wall and not

being able to take a single step" (Wallace 188). She faced a feeling of purposelessness many writers felt afterwards. It became very clear that a true and irreconcilable void existed between Wolf and the SED. She stated: "It became clear to a group of authors, that their direct contribution was no longer needed or welcomed." This "being thrown back" left them in an existential crisis. For Wolf, it felt as if the ground had been pulled out from under her (188). At that point many members left the GDR for West Germany, Christa Wolf just kept writing, still not able to turn her back on her hopes for the socialist state, despite her conflict with its governing party.

She remained an official party member until 1989, when she officially withdrew. She still was not ready to surrender her dreams. Towards the end of the GDR state, she used all of her international reputation and moral integrity (recognized in both West and East) in politics. She protested the brutality of some police actions, demanded the reinstatement of the banned authors, and signed the proclamation "*Fuer Unser Land.*" She was vehemently against the reunification of East and West Germany. She wanted the GDR to remain with the anti-fascist and humanistic ideals of which socialism is comprised to create a socialist alternative to the Federal Republic.

Christa Wolf traveled a long road from the patriotic fan of Hitler to a socialist devoted far beyond party lines. She allowed herself to grow and develop from the young woman who wrote *Moscow Novella* in a fervor of party devotion, to a mature woman who searched for the ideals that were missing in the SED version of socialism. The courage to break with socialist realism in *The Quest for Christa T.* was the beginning of her new path of searching beyond any social or political limits for a true socialist community.

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Vita

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